

No. 55

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ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

JACK LIGHTFOOT, PENNANT-WINNER OR WINDING UP THE FOUR-TOWN LEAGUE



MAURICE STEVENS

It was Jack Lightfoot's hour of triumph, and in spite of his protests the uproarious and good-natured crowd carried him off the field.

Publishers' Note. "Teach the American boy how to become an athlete, and lay the foundation for a Constitution greater than that of the United States."—Wise sayings from "Tip Top." There has never been a time when the boys of this great country took so keen an interest in all manly and health-giving sports as they do to-day. As proof of this witness the record-breaking throngs that attend college struggles on the gridiron, as well as athletic and baseball games, and other tests of endurance and skill. In a multitude of other channels this love for the "life strenuous" is making itself manifest, so that, as a nation, we are rapidly forging to the front as seekers of honest sport. Recognizing this "handwriting on the wall," we have concluded that the time has arrived to give this vast army of young enthusiasts a publication devoted exclusively to invigorating out-door life. We feel we are justified in anticipating a warm response from our sturdy American boys, who are sure to revel in the stirring phases of sport and adventure, through which our characters pass from week to week.

ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

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Jack Lightfoot, Pennant Winner;

OR,

WINDING UP THE FOUR-TOWN LEAGUE.

By MAURICE STEVENS.

CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

Jack Lightfoot, the best all-round athlete in Cranford or vicinity, a lad clear of eye, clean of speech, and, after he had conquered a few of his faults, possessed of a faculty for *doing things* while others were talking, that by degrees caused him to be looked upon as the natural leader in all the sports. Young America delights in—a boy who in learning to conquer himself put the power into his hands to wrest victory from others.

Tom Lightfoot, Jack's cousin, and sometimes his rival; though their striving for the mastery was always of the friendly, generous kind. Tom was called the "Book-Worm" by his fellows, on account of his love for studying such secrets of nature as practical observers have discovered and published; so that he possessed a fund of general knowledge calculated to prove useful when his wandering spirit took him abroad into strange lands.

Ned Skeen, of impulsive, nervous temperament, one of those who followed the newcomer, Birkett, being dazzled by the dash of his manner and the free way in which he flung money around.

Lafe Lampton, a big, hulking chap, with an ever present craving for something to eat. Lafe always had his appetite along, and proved a staunch friend of our hero through thick and thin.

Phil Kirtland, Jack's former rival, but who just at present was working on the ball team with Lightfoot.

Nat Kimball, an undersized fellow, whose hobby was the study of *jiu-jitsu*, and who had a dread of germs.

Jubal Marlin, **Brodie Strawn**, **Wilson Crane**, three members of the Cranford team.

Captain Toby Jenkins, who professes to be an ex-sea captain, but is not just what he seems.

Reel Snodgrass, who came from India, and possessed considerable skill as a magician.

Delancy Shelton, the son of a millionaire, and between whom and Jack there was little love lost.

Mack Remington, who aspired to be a newspaper reporter.

Kid Casey, the wizard pitcher of the Tidewater team.

Jerry Mulligan, an humble admirer of Jack.

Nellie Conner, who possessed the prettiest blue eyes in Cranford, according to Jack.

CHAPTER I.

"CAPT. TOBY JENKINS."

He was a small, red-faced, dark-eyed, English-looking man, with a plaid cap stuck on the top of his head.

Having entered the office of the Cranford House, he walked up to the desk with the rolling gait of a sailor, and brought his red fist down so heavily that the clerk, who was half dozing in his chair, turned the chair over in his efforts to rise quickly in answer to this thunderous summons.

"Shiver my timbers, but you've got a bloomin' beastly place 'ere!" he roared, in a voice that had apparently been thickened by all the fogs and chill winds of the Atlantic.

"Yes, sir," assented the staring clerk, hardly knowing what he said.

"Where's your sporting blood?" howled the red-faced man. "I'm looking for the betting men of this 'ere town. 'Ave you got 'em?"

He brought his red fist down again with a thump.

"You're looking for some one to bet with?"

"That's what I'm looking for? Where are they?"

He sidestepped and rolled again, as if he were on the swaying bridge of a steamship in mid-Atlantic, and, thrusting a hand into his pocket, brought up some bills, together with an English half crown.

He frowned at this, and rattled it on the desk.

"A bloomin' country you 'ave 'ere, that won't take good English money—the best, sir, in the world! A beastly country, I say, that prefers these 'ere rags to English coin!"

He flourished the greenbacks in the face of the clerk.

"Well, er—you see this isn't England," the clerk apologized.

"Don't I know that it isn't? 'Aven't I been knowing it for the past three months?"

"What do you want to get up a bet about?" the clerk ventured, timidly.

"The ball game to-morrow afternoon. There's to be a ball game 'ere to-morrow, between the nine of Tidewater and the nine of this place, I'm told. And I'm backing Tidewater."

He again shook the money at the clerk.

"You're living in Tidewater, then?"

"I am, young man; been living there for the 'ole of the past bloomin' month. You don't know me, I see?"

"I never happened to meet you, I'm sure," the clerk answered, deferentially.

"'Ave another look at me."

The clerk complied, giving him a comprehensive survey.

"I never saw you before, sir."

"Hand that's not my fault!" he laughed hoarsely. "Hi've been in this town before. If anybody should hask you who I am, tell 'em, Capt. Toby Jenkins, late of the English merchant marine, and before that 'ailing from Liverpool."

"Yes, sir; glad to meet you, Capt. Jenkins. Will you want to stop here?"

"I may later. Just now I'm looking for some of your bloomin' betting men. Where are they, if you 'ave any?"

The clerk had regained his nerve, and now laughed.

"Really, Capt. Jenkins, I can't say that we exactly have any betting men here in Cranford."

"Hand you call this a sporting town?" the captain roared, banging his red fist again upon the desk.

"We don't call it a sporting town," the clerk protested, mildly.

"Over in Tidewater they told me that Cranford was red with sporting blood. That you 'ave all kinds of

games 'ere, from year's end to year's end—games that a man can bet 'is money on."

He glared at the clerk.

"Do you mean to tell me that nobody is going to back your 'ome team to-morrow with money? 'Asn't anybody 'ere got courage enough to lay a wager on 'is 'ome nine?"

He rocked his small form back on his heels and stared at the clerk as if he could not believe so improbable a thing.

"I don't know of anyone who intends to do any betting on the nine, unless it's Jerry Mulligan."

Capt. Toby Jenkins smote his palm on the desk, rocking forward for the purpose.

"An Irishman, by the name! Shiver my toplights, is the spirit of loyalty so dead in this bloomin' place that no one but an Irishman will back the 'ome team with a money wager?"

He glared at the clerk.

"Who is this Mulligan? A millionaire, or the mayor of the place?"

The clerk laughed.

"Just an Irish cart driver; but he thinks the Cranford nine is about the best that ever stepped on a diamond, and he almost always goes among his friends and raises a pot to make a bet with. I put ten dollars into one of his pools once, myself."

"So, there is sporting blood in this place? And you said there wasn't! Where is this man Mulligan? I want to see 'im. I want to see the only sporting gentlemen 'ere, even if 'e is Irish."

He smote his hand once more on the desk, and, rocking back on his heels, glared at the clerk again, as if he were challenging that individual.

"I'll have him up here as soon as I can, and I don't doubt he'll be pleased to raise some money to wager with you. A thing of that kind always puts him in his element. Will you take a room and wait, or wait here?"

"I'll take a room."

The clerk whirled the register round for him to enter his name.

"I suppose you're aware that you'll run some risk in betting against Cranford? At any rate, it's the opinion here that the Cranford boys will win. There's only one thing against it, in my opinion."

Capt. Toby Jenkins stopped, with the pen uplifted, as he was about to sign his name.

"Hand what is that?"

"The fact that they're to play in their home town. In my judgment, a team never does so well in its home

town. The very fact that a big crowd of their friends are there to look on tends to rattle the players, in my estimation. Still, I think you'll be risking your money."

"A man halways risks 'is money when 'e wagers it, don't 'e?"

"Very true, sir."

The red-faced man bent over the book and scrawled with big flourishes :

"Capt. Toby Jenkins, of Tidewater, late of Liverpool."

"I believe you said you'd been only a month or so in Tidewater?"

"Honly a month."

"Not very well acquainted there yet, then?"

"No, sir."

"I'll give you a room on the second floor, an outer room, with good windows looking on the street."

"Hand send for this Jerry Mulligan, the only man in this bloomin' town with faith enough in 'is 'ome team to wager a few dollars hon it."

He gave this as a loud command.

And when the clerk had promised, Capt. Toby followed him up the stairs, rolling along as if he were climbing the companion way of a ship.

CHAPTER II.

REEL SNODGRASS HAS A VISITOR.

The advent of Capt. Toby created a good deal of amusing comment and excitement in Cranford.

Jerry Mulligan visited him at the hotel, going up to his room there, and found the captain roaring because no one had hurried sooner to meet him for the purpose of making a wager on the Cranford nine.

"Be gobs, I'm the b'y that will git the money fur yeez!" Jerry boasted. "Annything to sparate an Englishman frum his money. Dig up ivery cint that ye have, and I'll cover it fur yeez, aven money, and we'll hand the sthakes over to the clerk of this shebang."

Toby Jenkins drew out his money.

"Cover it!" he roared, dancing round as if in a fury.

"I'll have to raise it foorst," Jerry acknowledged. "But I'll have it fur yeez before the night, bedad."

Jerry raised a few dollars, all he could scrape together, and came back with it, and announced that he would raise more.

Capt. Toby sniffed contemptuously.

"Thirty dollars! Is that all you bring? Hand after I've come all the way over 'ere to meet the sportin'

blood of this beastly 'ole! Make it at least fifty, or I'll not wager a tuppence."

"I'll make it five hundred, before to-morry afternoon!" Jerry boasted, angrily, and went forth again, to try to make his word good.

All this came to the ears of Jack and his friends and amused them greatly.

Jack thought it well to warn Jerry against recklessness.

"We may lose to-morrow, you know," he urged.

Jerry stared at him with indignation.

"Is ut the captain of the nine that is sp'akin' to me, er some jellyfish that don't know beforhand phat he can do? Ut's the jellyfish, bedad, sure!"

Jack flushed.

"But we can't be sure of anything, you know."

"Everything in this warld is a risk, Jack, me b'y. Bizness is a risk, marryin' is a risk, gittin' a divorce is a risk, an' playin' ball is a risk. But in everything we think we're goin' to win, or we wouldn't go into ut. I'm belavin' ye're goin' to win—belavin' ut strhong enough to risk me money on ut, and you ought to believe ut still strhonger, fer yeez air the captain av the nine. Go home an' think that over, Jack, me b'y! Maybe ut will put some war-rm blood into yer sowl."

The mill hands, who seemed least able of all in the community to lose their money, made up a pot for Jerry, and that night he had the exquisite pleasure of shaking it under the red nose of Capt. Toby Jenkins.

It was two hours after this, and Jerry had taken himself hilariously away, when the doot of the room which Reel Snodgrass occupied in the same hotel was opened softly, and Capt. Toby Jenkins thrust his red face in.

Delancy Shelton was out. He was Reel's closest chum, but happened not to be in thus just then, though they occupied rooms there together.

Reel stared, when the red face appeared in the doorway; and stared still more, when Capt. Toby squeezed through into the room, and with a sailor's rolling walk came over and took a chair.

He had pulled the door to after him.

"What do you mean?" Reel asked, haughtily. "I believe I didn't invite you in."

He had taken from his lips the cigarette he had been smoking, and held it in his fingers.

He was attired in a new suit of checked cloth, and his tanned face looked rather attractive.

Toby Jenkins sank into the cushioned chair, elevated one leg over the other, thrust his hands into his pockets, and stared at his questioner.

"Get out of here!" said Reel, angered still more by what he considered the man's insolence.

Toby rose as if to go; but when he went to the door he simply turned the key in the lock, dropped the key into an outer pocket of his coat, and then came back and sank down again into the easy-chair.

Reel, thrown into a fury, reached over to touch the bell button, for the purpose of summoning the servants of the hotel and having the man thrown out.

But his hand stopped in mid air.

The man had doubled up in a queer, laughing posture, and was gurgling forth a horrible laugh.

Reel came to his feet, his face like flame.

"Boralmo!" he gasped.

He dropped down, shivering, his face losing that brilliant red and turning to ghastly white.

"Not at all," said the man in the chair, speaking in smooth, low tones—tones so different from those he had used in the hotel office that if the clerk had heard him now he would have been amazed.

"Oh, I know you now!" said Reel. "How did you get here? And where did you come from?"

"Capt. Toby" sat up straighter in the chair.

"So, the disguise is all right, is it? If it can fool you it *must* be good."

"In the name of the devil, why have you come here again, and in that disguise?"

Boralmo, for it was indeed Boralmo, who was an Englishman, though he had posed as a Hindoo, smiled and stroked his red face.

"How about my make-up?" he asked.

"It would fool Satan himself!"

"My dear boy, don't be profane—don't be so profane! It's unbecoming, you know."

He saw that Reel was shaking like a leaf, and he smiled again.

"But you told me when you were here last that you weren't coming again! And now you're here."

"And you're not pleased to see me?"

Reel did not immediately answer.

"Don't you think you ought to be pleased to see me? Just remember: I found you homeless in India, after you'd wandered about there with that begging magician; and it was I who brought you here, where you've secured so good a home with your Uncle Snodgrass that you seem to prefer to leave it and spend your time in this hotel with a young cad who has more money than brains. You'd be in rags, in India, now, but for me; and now you're the heir of the richest man in Cranford."

He laughed again, screwing his form down into the chair and tossing one leg over the other.

"But what are you doing here?" Reel demanded.

"I wanted to see you. It's been some weeks now since we parted. Don't you credit me with having some affection for you?"

Reel stared at him, with lips apart and a catching of the breath.

"I half believe that you're my own father!" he exclaimed, in a low voice.

"Don't disgrace me, Reel, by thinking a thing of that kind!"

He leaned back and surveyed Reel, and now a strange, fiery glint, like the flame of a lamp, seemed to shine from his eyes.

"How have you been doing, since I saw you last?" he queried. "Well, I judge. You've put some new things in these rooms, since I called on you."

"Delancy put those in; I didn't."

"But you helped him select them. I know how it was. You picked them out, and his money paid for them. But I suppose you wouldn't call that buying them yourself?"

"He may come up here any minute," said Reel, in a frightened tone. "How am I going to explain, if he sees you here?"

The fiery glint appeared to die out of the sparkling eyes and the man seemed again the Englishman of sea-going achievements.

"Oh, just introduce me as Capt. Toby Jenkins! You've heard of me to-day, I don't doubt. You can tell him that I dropped in here to see if I couldn't get you to wager something on the Cranford nine."

But in spite of this way of escape, Reel looked uneasy.

"What made you assume that disguise?" he questioned.

The glint came back into those dark eyes—a kind of hot light that seemed to shine behind the pupils.

"I love disguises, and I'm eccentric. Will that do? You know it's true. It is fun for me to come into a place like this and fool the people. 'All the world's a stage!' People say that, yet they don't realize how true it is. We're all playing our parts on this great stage. And every single actor on it is disguised in some way."

Reel seemed unable to look away from the hot glow of those eyes.

"My dear boy, you are playing one of the star parts! Do you know it? You are not all you seem. You are made up for the part. None of the players

are just what they seem, and they all have some trick of make-up; that is, they all make various little pretenses, are guilty of little deceptions and little hypocrisies, and pretend to do be different from what they are. Now, isn't that acting on the world's great stage? It simply suits me to go a little further in my disguising than they do, that's all. And so I'm here. First, because I wanted to see you. You won't believe that, but it's true. Do you think we could go through all the things, all the dangers, we passed through together, and me not care to see you once in a while, even if you don't seem glad to have me come? Whether you're glad or not, I've come."

"But you put me in danger!" Reel protested.

"Oh, no! It will put you in no danger to be seen talking with Capt. Toby Jenkins, the eccentric English sailor, who is crazy to wager on something or other, and has put up money on Tidewater in the ball game of to-morrow."

"I heard of that."

"Everybody has. So it will seem natural if you say to anyone that Capt. Toby called on you and tried to get you to lay a little sum on Cranford."

Reel saw that this would seem a very natural thing, and it made him feel easier.

"And then I came, also, because—well, because I wanted to."

"You'll not try to do any work here to-night?"

Boralmo laughed, and again his eyes glowed. He passed a hand smoothly across his face.

"Well, yes, I may; I may conclude to do something to-night. And if I do, no doubt you'd like to help me in it."

CHAPTER III.

IN THE POWER OF BORALMO.

"What do you intend to do?" Reel asked, hoarsely. He seemed terrified.

"You've been here long enough to find out a good many things," said Boralmo, smoothly, stroking his red face.

"For God's sake, what do you intend to do now?" Boralmo rose softly from his chair.

"Come into my room," he said, in a low tone. "We can talk better there. Will it be necessary to leave something in the way of a note, to explain to your friend here, if you do not come back right away?"

Reel shivered.

"No," he said; "we come and go just as we like, without any questions."

"That's good. My room is eleven. Come there in a minute or two."

Though he knew that Reel did not want to obey, he seemed to have no fear of disobedience; but rose, and, unlocking the door, disappeared, with steps so light that when he was in the hall Reel could not hear them.

Reel got upon his feet and stared at the door and then at the window. His face was pale, and he was breathing heavily. It seemed that he was almost on the point of making a desperate retreat from the place.

But he did not.

He waited in his room a little while; then stepped into the hall, and took his way softly to the room occupied by the Englishman.

The latter had the door ajar and met him at the entrance.

"Ah! you're prompt. Well, we haven't any too much time. We can talk better in here, and be in no danger of an intrusion from your friend."

He let Reel in, and then locked the door, and stuffed something into the keyhole.

"Don't you think you could be satisfied to go away to-night and let this matter drop?" Reel asked, helplessly.

"And forfeit that bet with Jerry Mulligan?"

He laughed as if amused.

"No, not to-night, Reel."

"But see the danger! I mean the danger you put me in. I'm trying to get on my feet here. I'm willing to acknowledge that you brought me here, and if it will please you, I'll say that but for you I would probably have been to-day a beggar on the streets of Bombay. You, and that Indian fakir, Boralmo, whose name you took, taught me what I know of magic and hypnotism. I'll admit all those things, if it pleases you to have me do so."

"Always admit the truth, my dear boy!"

He sank into a chair and smiled.

It would have required no great stretch of imagination to fancy that he was a cat and Reel a mouse.

"But now that I'm here," Reel went on, "and am trying to get on my feet and be something here, is it just kind of you to come with these schemes of yours and plunge me into danger? What if you are caught?"

"I might confess the whole thing about both of us!"

He smiled to see the effect this had on the youth before him.

"I suppose you've been living the Sunday-school style of life, my dear boy, since you've been here? You've been very good, and all the young people think you're

it, and their mammas and papas believe that you're an angel in danger of sprouting wings. Is that it?"

"Not at all. And you know better. I've made a good many fool mistakes; but I begin to see that they're mistakes. I want to stay here."

"So that you can inherit the fortune of your dear uncle, Mr. Snodgrass? Ha! ha!"

"I want to stay here, and go to school this fall and winter. I'd like to take part in some of the sports. I got kicked out of the nine, and you know why."

"Because you sold their signals."

"And who forced me to sell them?"

"Oh, you were eager enough yourself!"

"I was kicked out, and all summer I've been kept out of every kind of game and sport."

"You've had your delightful Delancy!"

An oath ripped from Reel's lips.

"He's a fool and a milksop."

"Yet he has money."

"He has money, and that's why I hang to him so closely."

"And money is what I want now!"

The red came again into the eyes with which he seemed to bore Reel Snodgrass through and through.

"I'm here for the fun of the thing, because I like to play at disguises and do my stunt in that way on the world's great stage, and I wanted to see you; but, at the same time, now that I am here, I'm going to try to recoup myself for my trouble. What do you know about the safe of the First National?"

"Nothing."

"Snodgrass is virtually at the head of that?"

"I believe so."

"And, of course, he has the combination of the safe."

"I don't know anything about that."

Reel was staring, as if frightened.

The red behind Boralmo's eyes seemed to glow even brighter.

"You remember what I asked you to do, when I was here before. I told you to get hold of that combination!"

"What if I didn't? How could I get it?"

"You could get it from Snodgrass. And you did. I'm a mind reader, you know."

"I think you're the devil!"

Again that horrible laugh gurgled forth.

"Thanks, dear boy, for the compliment."

"I don't know anything!" Reel asserted, doggedly.

"Reel, tell me that combination, at once!"

There was something in the tone that made Reel almost jump, made his face go several shades paler,

and seemed to take all the fiber out of him, reducing him to the consistency of a jellyfish, so far as his will power and his resisting ability were concerned.

After staring for a moment or two into those glowing eyes he rose from his seat and began to fumble in his pockets.

"It's in that room," he said, hoarsely.

"Get it!"

Boralmo rose and unlocked the door, and Reel slipped out into the hall.

Again he looked about wildly, as if he desired to bolt from the house; yet he did not, but went on into the room from which he had recently come.

In a little while he was back in Boralmo's room, and the door was locked and the keyhole covered.

Boralmo clutched eagerly the bit of paper on which Reel had set down the combination of the safe.

"Good!" he whispered, while his face glowed. "I can manage the rest of it."

He looked at Reel.

"It would be interesting to know just how you got this? I know you're clever, but how did you contrive it? He didn't give it to you himself?"

"I watched him one day, when he was unlocking the safe, and when he locked it again. I noticed every turn he made, and—well, I've got a pretty good memory. As soon as I could get by myself I set it down, to keep from forgetting it."

"Have you tried it?"

"No."

"But you meant to some day?"

Reel shook his head.

"Ah! I know that you meant to. Some day, if things had gone wrong with you—that is, very wrong—you would have gone through that safe yourself, and then jumped the town."

He seemed so sure of this that he did not stop to force Reel to admit its truth, or to deny it.

Reel now sat limply in his chair, staring at the human fiend before him, at the fiend in whose clutches he felt himself to be powerless.

"You may have made a mistake in setting these down, or when you were watching him?"

For the first time Boralmo displayed some uneasiness, and the thought came to Reel that he had been a fool in setting the thing down correctly. He could have made some little error and pretended that he had not meant to do it, and the contents of that safe would have been saved from the hands of this man.

Yet he knew he could not have done so, for even now

the very thought of what Boralmo might do if he found the combination wrong made him shiver.

"Come," said Boralmo, rising, and looking at his watch. "I'd like to see if this is right. I'll slip down the back stairs, the way I got out of the place when I was here before, and you may go boldly out by the front. Meet me in the shadow of that stairway, at that corner, in five minutes."

He unlocked the door, and, without waiting to see if Reel intended to obey, he stole through the hall as if he were a gliding shadow.

When Reel looked out Boralmo was gone.

Reel stood in the door, staring with white face in the direction Boralmo had taken, and again he appeared half resolved to make a dash from the place, and disappear from sight, if only temporarily. But again the will of Boralmo controlled him, and, after getting his cap, he descended to the office, and then went out into the street.

When he met Boralmo at the point designated, the latter whispered:

"I'm going to the rear of the bank, where it backs against that little street or alley. You go out on the street in front of it, and stay there and watch. If anything suspicious happens, begin to whistle 'America' or 'God Save the King.' That will be the signal for me to stop work, or slide.

He slipped away again.

Five minutes later Reel Snodgrass was walking to and fro along the street in front of the First National, with his hands thrust into his pockets, and shivering as if a cold wind were blowing over him, though the night was fairly warm.

Back in the bank was Boralmo, trying the combination of the safe.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CAPTURE.

Suddenly Reel gave a start of fear.

Though the hour was late, he saw Jack Lightfoot approaching along that street, accompanied by Tom Kennedy, the watchman and constable.

Nothing is truer than that "a guilty conscience needs no accuser," and that, "the wicked flee when no man pursueth."

To Reel's heated imagination, Jack Lightfoot and Tom Kennedy had got wind of what was transpiring in the bank and were approaching for the purpose of nabbing Boralmo.

As a matter of fact, Jack had but chanced to meet

Kennedy, as he was on his way home, and was merely walking along there with him, talking of the ball game to be played the next day, while Kennedy had made mention of the queer English sea captain with whom Jerry Mulligan had been doing some betting.

But, even while Reel looked and trembled, the keen eyes of Jack Lightfoot caught the gleam of a light—a sudden flash that sprang into view and then went out as suddenly.

He touched Kennedy on the arm.

"Did you see that?" he asked.

"What? I didn't see anything."

"It was the flash of a light, and it seemed to come from that little window in the rear of the bank. It may have been made by a match, or by a lantern."

Kennedy stared at the building.

"Air you sure of that?"

"Well, I thought so. I'm sure I saw that flash, but it's gone now."

They stood staring at the little window which Jack had indicated. But the flash did not come again.

"That wasn't just your eyes, I reckon?" said Kennedy. "Sometimes a sort of flash will shoot up, and it comes from the eyes of the fellow that sees it. I've had it happen to me."

"It wasn't my eyes!" Jack insisted.

Kennedy hesitated.

"Well, the way to be sure is to make sure," he said, oracularly. "I'll go round to the back of the buildin' and take a look. You walk along here. There's somebody comin' along the street there. It may be one of the fellow's spies, if any burglar is in there."

Kennedy hopped over the nearby fence and hurried toward the rear of the building.

As Jack drew near the figure that Kennedy had mentioned, he recognized Reel Snodgrass, and, at the same moment, Reel began to whistle "God Save the King," a tune familiar to every boy, for it is the tune we here use for "My Country, 'Tis of Thee!"

Reel was whistling this loudly when Jack met him.

"You're musical to-night!" Jack cried, in a hearty manner.

Reel stared at him, as if he didn't know him at first.

"Oh, it's Lightfoot!" he exclaimed, trying hard to conceal his uneasiness and his trembling. "Wandering about late, aren't you? I was just on my way to the hotel."

Jack looked into Reel's face. The light was poor, and he could not see how white it was.

Then he made a confession:

"I saw a light in the bank a minute ago, and Ken-

nedy has gone round to the rear. I saw the light, and we thought at once of burglars."

Reel turned round and looked with apparent curiosity at the building, which loomed darkly near at hand. He could hide his face better when it was turned in that direction, and he did not speak for some time.

When he spoke he was able to control the trembling that tried to get into his words.

"Is that so?" he said, as if astonished. "Well, we'll see, or hear, some fun in a minute, if there is a burglar in there! Kennedy will fight, and a burglar usually expects to, if he's cornered. You couldn't have been mistaken, I suppose?"

"I don't think so," said Jack. "We'll soon find out."

"The thing's risky, for Kennedy!"

"Yes, it is; I suppose he ought to have summoned help."

"And given the burglar time to get away?"

Reel laughed in a forced manner.

After that they stood there, staring and listening.

Then they fairly jumped, for sounds of a lively fight, mixed with heavy oaths, came from the interior of the bank.

"Somebody in there, sure!" cried Jack, and he jumped the fence and ran at full speed toward the rear of the building, for the purpose of helping Kennedy, if he could.

Reel seemed about to follow Jack, but hesitated, and stood shivering on the corner, not knowing what to do.

"Oh, this is awful!" he groaned. "But perhaps he can bluff the thing through and keep them from discovering who he is. He's clever, and if he can keep them from making that discovery he may get a chance to escape, or I might help him out of the jail. But I wonder if Kennedy will get him?"

He had been expecting to hear the report of a pistol.

Not able to contain himself on the street longer, after a few minutes of hesitation he leaped the fence and hastened toward the rear of the building.

He saw Jack at the window, yelling through it to Kennedy.

Then he heard Kennedy's bellowing voice:

"I've got him!"

Reel stumbled against the side of the building, weak and sick with foreboding.

Coming close up to the window, he heard Kennedy scrambling across the floor, as if he were dragging the man he had captured.

"My lantern's right out there, Jack," Kennedy shouted. "Light it!"

Jack found the lantern by the side of the house and hastily set a match to the wick.

By this time Kennedy had dragged his prisoner up to the window.

"Oh, it's you, Snodgrass?" he said, beholding Reel there. "Lay hold here and give me some aid. The fellow's drunk, I think, or he's pretending. He may try to get away, though I've got the nippers on him."

Jack held up the lantern, flashing its light into the face of the prisoner.

Reel almost fell in a faint, so great was his surprise.

The man Kennedy had captured looked to be a tramp!

"Where is Boralmo?" was the cry that surged in Reel's mind, when he saw that dirty face.

"Lay hold here, Snodgrass!" Kennedy commanded.

Reel, shaken as he had seldom been, laid hold of the form that Kennedy dragged to the window, and helped Kennedy get the man through to the outside.

"I found him in there, hiding," said Kennedy, panting from his exertions. "He tried to get to the window, but I stopped him by cracking him one with my club. After that we had it. But I put the nippers on him, and here he is. Looks like a tramp, too. But he was trying to burgle the bank, all right. If not, what was he doing in there. I found this window unlocked and the bars pried off."

The man stood up, breathing heavily, but otherwise silent, and apparently cowed.

The light of the lantern showed him as a dirty-faced tramp, wearing a soiled, dusty suit of blue, that looked as if it had been used for a broom.

"Perty good clothes you've got on!" said Kennedy, noting the suit. "You stole 'em, I reckon."

The tramp said nothing, but stood backed against the building, blinking owlishly in the light, and cowering as if he feared to again receive a blow from the club.

"Now, you'll come along with me!" Kennedy shouted. "Snodgrass, I think you'd better jump to the nearest telephone and get word to your uncle and to the other bank officials, or else run down to his house yourself. He'll want to know about this."

Reel was only too glad to vanish, and he went quickly and willingly.

"Now, Jack, if you'll watch here by this rear window a few minutes, to see that nobody else goes in, I'll get this rascal to the jail; and then I'll come back."

He caught the man roughly by the shoulders.

"Move on now!" he cried, in a threatening tone.

"And no monkey business, understand, or I'll break your head for you!"

The prisoner moved in the direction pointed out, at the side of the constable, and Jack stood by the window, still holding the lantern.

He was naturally somewhat excited and wrought up, for this was an adventure worth while.

CHAPTER V.

CAPT. TOBY'S REAPPEARANCE.

Two hours later Reel Snodgrass was given another surprise.

He had gone with his uncle and some other men to the bank, where they had found that the safe had not been touched, and Reel had returned again toward the hotel, after a time spent on the streets.

He was about to proceed to the office, where a light was burning, before going up to his room, when he heard his name called in a whisper from the shadows of the stairway already mentioned, and when he stepped back there, he saw before him the figure of Capt. Toby Jenkins.

Capt. Toby held up a hand, when he saw that Reel was ready to fire a volley of questions at him.

"I'm going to my room. I waited for you here, to tell you so. Come there as soon as you can."

He drew back within the deep shadows, and Reel passed on, filled with questioning wonder.

When Reel went to the room and tapped softly on the door, it was opened quickly, and he squeezed in, for he saw within the room Boralmo, otherwise Capt. Toby.

Boralmo closed the door, locked it, covered the key-hole, and dropped quietly into a chair.

He was laughing one of those horrible laughs that always chilled Reel's blood.

"Did you see the tramp?" he whispered, hoarsely, and went into convulsions again.

"But where were you?" Reel gasped, a suspicion of the truth coming to him.

"I was the tramp."

"I can hardly believe it."

"Sure thing."

"I can't understand it. How could you—where'd you get the clothes?"

"I heard your whistle, and I heard that fellow coming. I was making for the window, when I saw I couldn't get out that way without risking one of his bullets. So, I made a quick shift."

"But how could you?"

Reel stared in wonder.

"Easy enough—in fact, it was dead easy! When I first went in I noticed that an old suit of clothes—the janitor's, I suppose—hanging there on a nail. When I saw I couldn't get out I snatched them from the nail and swept them over the floor to make them look more dusty than they were. Then I slid out of my outer clothing and into those. I threw mine into a dark corner, rubbed some dirty grease paint over my face, altered my features this way"—he screwed up his face until it seemed that of another man—"and there I was. The whole thing didn't take more than a minute, and that fool constable stayed at that window two minutes or more peering in. If I'd wanted to, I could have potted him like a rabbit; but that would have been murder, and I'd had the whole country on my track."

"But you were captured? And he ironed you, and took you to jail."

Boralmo chuckled and drew from his pockets the handcuffs that had been on his wrists.

"Would I let a barn like the Cranford jail hold me? And don't I get out of things like these every night, when I'm giving my performances? I had my keys; kept them tucked under my arm all the time, and had them there when that fool constable searched me, and found nothing. But I did better than merely get away."

He thrust a hand into one of his pockets and brought out a huge roll of bills.

"Out of that safe!" he said. "Of course I had to go back there, to get my clothing. They had patched up that rear window; but, thinking I was safely housed, they'd neglected to put a guard there, though they had one stationed out in front. I went through the window, changed back into my own clothing, hung the janitor's suit neatly on the nail where it belonged, and then finished the job I didn't have time to do at the first visit. And here's the result! I haven't had time to count it yet, either."

He began to count the bills he had secured, laying them out on his knees.

"Does my face still show that dirty stuff I put on to give the tramp color?"

He stopped counting long enough to ask this, and asked it as coolly as if he had just come in from a walk and wanted to know if dust grime had settled on his face.

"It shows some," said Reel, frankly.

"Wet that sponge over there and bring it to me."

He went on counting while Reel obeyed; but stopped

long enough to pass the wet sponge carefully over his face.

When he had done that and Reel informed him that the dirty stains were gone he finished his count of the money.

"A pretty good haul!" he said, cheerfully. "There'll be a great old howl in the morning, when they find both the tramp and the money gone."

"You'd better be going, too, don't you think?" said Reel, anxiously.

"And give them a hint that I'm the man? I'm not so big a fool as that, I hope."

He rose from his chair, stuffed the money into different pockets, and taking up the lamp walked over to the little mirror.

Then he produced from somewhere in his clothing a small box of pigments, and gave to his face the red look it had shown when he appeared at the hotel in the person of Capt. Toby Jenkins.

He worked at this until he had the whole to suit him, and then came back and dropped with a smile into the chair again.

"Pretty good for one night! And think of the sensation! That's worth as much to me as the money. Hard up, my dear boy?"

He thrust a hand into one of his pockets.

"I've got some money," said Reel, hastily.

"All right, then; but I could let you have some of this just as well as not. I got it easy enough. And, really, I suppose, when one comes to think of it, this is taking a little bit away from that fortune you'll inherit some day from Snodgrass."

"I wish you wouldn't speak so loud," Reel warned, nervously, in a whisper.

"My dear boy, it's late; even the cats have gone to bed!"

He took out a cigar and lighted it at the chimney of the lamp.

"Reel, pity the poor tramps!"

He had sunk back into the chair and seemed to be in an amiable mood. He laughed easily, and all that hot, red fire that so often terrorized Reel had gone out of his eyes.

"All the sins of a community are laid on the poor tramp. The papers will say to-morrow that a tramp robbed the bank, when common sense ought to tell people that a tramp has neither the ingenuity nor the courage to do a thing of that kind. A tramp will do petty stealing, but never a job like that. The sins that are laid at the door of the tramp, and the way he is abused, is enough to discourage him and make him

go out of business. Always help the tramps, Reel, for they're handy to have about, to blame things on. If it wasn't for the tramps I don't know what certain gentlemen like myself would do."

He looked at his watch, and gaped as if weary and sleepy.

"Getting late," he announced nonchalantly. "I think I'll turn in as soon as I finish this cigar. Don't be surprised in the morning if Capt. Toby comes to see you and your young friend and tries to get you to bet on Cranford. We're going to have a great ball game to-morrow, Reel, I'm told. I rather wish you were on one of those nines, so that I could see your work."

This notification that the interview was at an end came as a relief to Reel Snodgrass.

He was glad to get out of the room and retreat to his own, where he found Delancy just turning in.

"Aw, you look as if you'd seen a ghost, bah Jove!"

"I'm sick," said Reel, and truly he felt sick. "I think I'll go right to bed."

Delancy's sympathy was aroused.

He came over and looked Reel in the face.

"Bah Jove, you do look deuced white, don't y' know! Perhaps I'd better send for a doctor?"

"Nothing of the kind!" Reel snapped. "I'm just sick at my stomach, and will be all right in the morning. It must have been that confounded lobster I had for supper."

"Bah Jove, it must have been! Too much lobster! Yes, that's what it was, don't y' know!"

Reel crept away into his own room and began to disrobe for bed.

But though he lay down, he did not sleep a wink that night.

CHAPTER VI.

JACK LIGHTFOOT'S SUSPICIONS.

The excitement in Cranford was great the next morning, when it was found that the "tramp-burglar" had escaped from the jail, in spite of the fact that Kennedy had put him there with irons on his wrists.

But great as it was, it was increased wonderfully when the bank officers, at a later hour, discovered that the safe had been opened and all the cash on hand had been taken.

It was not as large a sum as the burglar would have secured the night before, for a heavy shipment of money had been made that day to the big city bank

where the Cranford institution kept the deposits on which it drew.

Nevertheless, the amount missing was big enough to be startling, and the fact that the "tramp-burglar" had escaped was mortifying to the officers, and particularly to Kennedy, who could hardly believe his eyes when he saw the jail empty and the bars on the window twisted out of place. The handcuffs could not be found, and the theory was now held that the tramp had fled into the surrounding hills with them on his wrists.

The neighboring towns and cities were notified of the robbery and of the escape of the burglar, and descriptions of him, as given by Kennedy, were telegraphed to all points.

Kennedy went himself, and sent out parties, over the roads that led from Cranford, hunting for the tramp.

All this was "nuts" for Mack Remington, for it made good "copy." Mack sent a long account of the capture of the robber and of the other exciting events and discoveries of the night and morning to the Cardiff *Guardian*, and telegraphed a paragraph to his paper in New York.

The most of his material he got from Jack Lightfoot, with some things from Kennedy and from Reel Snodgrass. But Reel did "not know much."

Up in his room at the Cranford House, Capt. Toby Jenkins roared gently to himself when some of these things floated to him through the windows.

"Hope they'll catch that tramp!" he said, and then he patted one of the rolls of bills which he had stowed in various places over his person, while he looked from the window down upon the excited crowds who were talking of the burglary and the burglar's marvelous escape.

Jack Lightfoot had not slept much more that night than had Reel Snodgrass, and that was a bad thing for the captain and pitcher who hoped to help win a baseball battle that afternoon.

But Jack's conscience was easy, which Reel's was not, and that made a great difference in his favor.

The things that kept Jack awake, after he had gone home, were connected largely with Reel Snodgrass himself.

Jack recalled how he had seen Reel walking back and forth in front of the bank, and how Reel had begun to whistle in rather a loud way.

He also recalled Reel's nervous manner, which Reel had not been wholly able to hide.

It will be remembered that Jack Lightfoot had many reasons for regarding Reel Snodgrass generally with

suspicion. Reel had given him much occasion to think ill of him.

Twice Jack had discovered Boralmo, while the latter was trying to rob Mr. Snodgrass; and at other times Jack had encountered Boralmo, on the latter's occasional surreptitious visits to Cranford.

Jack did not know, however, that Boralmo was not a Hindoo. For that reason he did not at once connect Boralmo with the robbery of the bank. He was misled, too, by the trampish appearance of the masquerading Englishman.

Yet the more Jack thought the matter over the stranger seemed the actions of Reel Snodgrass. Jack had a retentive memory, which held things little noticed by him even at the time; and all the queer nervousness Reel had displayed while the tramp was being dragged by Kennedy to the window came back to Jack's mind as he considered the matter.

Why had Reel been so nervous?

That was a hard nut to crack.

Jack had turned over in bed after a while, resolutely putting all these things from his mind, determined to be the last to do Reel Snodgrass an injustice.

But when the morning dawned and he received the news of the tramp's escape and of the robbery of the bank, they came back to him with redoubled force.

Why had Reel started to whistling so loudly as Jack approached him, and why had he shown such unnatural nervousness? Apparently, there was no reason in the world why Reel should have been nervous at the time. He was not noted for nervousness, nor for any lack of physical courage.

By and by Jack went down to the bank, to which others had gone and were going, and took a look at the broken window, in the clear daylight.

He entered the bank and looked round, finding Kennedy there before him.

Suddenly his eyes fell on the dusty suit of blue hanging on its nail in a corner of the building, well back from the doors.

Jack eyed this, and, going up, took hold of it for a closer scrutiny.

The thought flashed on him with overpowering force that this was just like the dusty blue clothing worn by the tramp; yet the thing seemed so improbable that he put the thought away.

Yet, though he thus declared it improbable, he could not get that thought out of his mind.

Then came a startling discovery.

Jack went back to the clothing, and began to look them over again.

As he did so, a bit of torn and soiled paper fluttered down to the floor. Jack picked it up and saw that it held writing. It was a torn scrap, and but a few words were on it, and they seemed to have no orderly sequence. Yet something in the writing riveted his attention.

He was about to speak to Kennedy about it, but abandoned the idea.

A minute or two later he encountered the janitor of the building, going the rounds of his work.

"Is that your clothing hanging on that nail?" Jack asked, and was told that it was.

"Did you ever see this before?" he inquired, showing the bit of writing.

"I never did; where'd you find it?"

"It dropped down, when I was shaking your clothing a while ago. I was looking at the suit and shook it, and this dropped down."

"Just some old scrap, I s'pose, that stuck to me when I was workin'."

For one brief instant a dim suspicion that the janitor might have been mixed up in that robbery came to Jack; but when he looked at the man, and recalled what he knew of him, he saw the improbability of it.

Jack put the paper in his pocket now, and after a time went home again. Apparently, he had made no progress.

By and by Tom Lightfoot, his cousin, came into the shed room, where Jack was at work.

Jack produced the scrap of writing and showed it to him, and told what he knew of it.

Tom stared, and as usual whipped out his little magnifier and held it over the writing.

"If I didn't know it couldn't be, I should say that was written by that Hindoo magician, Boralmo."

A queer thrill shot through Jack when Tom made this announcement.

"What makes you say so?"

"Well, it looks like it."

"Where did you ever see his handwriting?"

"On the hotel register, that first time he came here, when he gave that sleight-of-hand exhibition in the town hall. But, of course, it can't be. He stayed at the Cranford House one night, you know, the first night he was here, before he went to Mr. Snodgrass'."

"Let's go up and look at that signature," said Jack, eagerly.

"All right, if you say so."

Then Tom began to count backward, to ascertain the date of the first appearance of Boralmo in Cranford,

when he had come with Reel, and Reel had laid claim to being Snodgrass' nephew.

Going to the hotel, and looking over the register, which the clerk pushed out to them at their request, they soon found Boralmo's handwriting, and Tom laid the scrap of paper down by it.

"It surprised me, when I first saw this signature, because it was so well written," he said; "so well written for a Hindoo, I mean. But I suppose he must have had an English education. That's what made me notice it, and remember it."

Together they compared the writing.

Tom looked at Jack.

"What do you think?" he said.

Jack was fairly trembling.

"They seem identical!"

"They do!"

Then Tom made what appeared to be an astounding discovery, by carelessly turning the pages of the register until he came to names placed there the day before and beheld the sprawled signature of Capt. Toby Jenkins. He was so astonished that his mouth dropped open.

"See that!" he whispered, excitedly. "That's not just like it, but it's much the same. It's bigger and sprawlier, but—"

He stopped and glanced at the clerk, and saw that he was paying no attention to their actions.

"Oh, well, of course it can't be!" he added.

He closed the book, and Jack followed him outside.

"Of course it can't be!" Tom repeated. "But that signature of Toby Jenkins looks awfully like that of Boralmo, and like this writing. If the thing wasn't impossible—"

As they walked together back to Jack's home, they talked the matter over, and Jack again told Tom of Reel's strange actions and queer nervousness.

"But it can't be!" said Tom. "Boralmo is a Hindoo, this Toby Jenkins is an English sea captain, and that scrap of paper was found in a suit of clothing worn by the janitor of the bank. So, you see, the whole thing falls to pieces. The resemblance is remarkable, but that's the end of it; it's only a resemblance."

"You must be right," Jack admitted.

CHAPTER VII.

JACK WATCHES THE SEA CAPTAIN.

Though Jack Lightfoot had confessed, and had felt, that Tom must be right, he still was not satisfied.

He went to the hotel again, this time alone, and con-

sidered himself fortunate, when he found Capt. Toby Jenkins roaring away in the office.

Capt. Toby was roundly scorning the betting men of Cranford for their lack of spirit in not coming forward more promptly and meeting his offers of wagers on the Tidewater nine.

"Hi'm offering even money," he grumbled, "and where's the man to take me? And yet the people 'ere say that the 'ome nine is going to win this hafternoon. Money talks, you know! Where's the man who believes it strong enough to risk 'is money on 'is belief?"

"Oh, we just say that because it's the right thing for us to say," said the clerk, laughing at the captain's manner. "That's the way we interpret the spirit of loyalty."

He turned to Jack.

"Here's the captain of the Cranford team, Capt. Jenkins, and you'll hear him say that the Cranford nine is going to flax Tidewater this afternoon."

Capt. Toby turned and Jack looked him full in the eye.

Yet Capt. Toby did not quail, but stared back as hard.

"So this is the young cockatoo Hi've been 'earing about, is it?"

"I'm the captain of the nine," said Jack, studying the face of the man before him.

"And you're going to win this hafternoon?"

"We hope to."

"You 'ope to?"

"We intend to try to win, and I think we can; I feel pretty sure of it."

There was nothing of boasting in the assertion. Jack was hardly thinking of the captain, so taken was he with the thought in his mind—the wonder, if this could by any possibility be Boralmo.

"It's nonsense to think it!" was the conclusion forced upon him. "This is a red-faced Englishman, and Boralmo was a Hindoo."

Yet he continued to watch Toby Jenkins, as the latter went on roaring against the lack of betting spirit in Cranford, which he seemed to consider the same thing as disloyalty to the home nine. If a man would not bet on the Cranford nine, Capt. Toby assumed that the man did not believe the nine had a chance to win. Of course, this was mere assumption, affected for the purpose of deceit.

Jack came away from the hotel as much puzzled as when he went there, and, if possible, more so.

Capt. Toby's lurching walk was something like that

of the tramp who had been dragged to the jail, he had observed.

Still this could not be considered significant, even though the writing on the scrap of paper that had fluttered down from that dusty suit of blue belonging to the bank janitor seemed the same as Capt. Toby's signature. Jack was not yet able to believe it possible that the tramp had worn that suit.

Jack was so puzzled and tangled by all the conflicting thoughts that tore through his mind that he was actually given a headache.

"Oh, the whole thing is foolishness!" he said to himself. "It's worse than foolishness—it's simply rot! I'd be ashamed to hint it to anybody."

Still, Jack could not get it out of his mind.

He could hardly think of the coming ball game for thinking of this mystery, which, however, he refused to call a mystery, as it seemed so like moonshine and nonsense.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAPT. TOBY IN A NEW ROLE.

Just about the time that Jack had determined to put the whole subject away as veriest nonsense a thing occurred which seemed to him astounding, however it may have been viewed by others.

As this was the last ball game of the season, and Tidewater and Cranford were to fight for the pennant in this game, steps had been taken to make the attendance something phenomenal.

The general passenger agent of the railway, remembering the success of a previous excursion over the lines of his road to Cranford, when a ball game was the chief attraction, had advertised low-price excursion rates to beautiful Cranford Lake on the day of the game, reminding people that this was about the last chance of the season to visit the beautiful lake, and also emphasizing the fact that a great game of baseball could be expected on that day, when Tidewater and Cranford would cross bats for the pennant.

In taking this step he had consulted with the Cranford nine, suggesting in his letter that they might make something for their gyms by charging a small admission at the gate.

This they had decided to do, and were to divide the gate money that day with the Tidewater nine, after the expenses were paid.

The high-school boys had already paid for the old carriage shop, in which their gym was located.

However, as half of the share of the gate money

to be received by the Cranford nine would come to the high-school boys—the other half going to the gym of the academy—the high-school boys were naturally anxious for a record-breaking crowd, as that would give them money with which to put in certain apparatus they desired, and to fit the gym up more comfortably for winter.

And the academy boys, whose leader was Phil Kirtland, were quite as anxious to have a little money for their gym, for similar purposes.

Hence the Cranford nine, and all their friends of both schools, had thrown themselves into the work of getting a big attendance at the ball game, by distributing handbills throughout the country along all the roads and crossroads, riding out for the purpose on their wheels, and sticking the bills up everywhere, as well as scattering them among the people.

This, with what the railroad was doing, and the further fact that a big attendance could be expected from Tidewater, seemed to guarantee a large crowd.

In addition to other things, the general passenger agent of the railway, working in connection with the nines that were to play, had engaged an aéronaut to make a balloon ascension from the fair grounds just before the game was to begin.

And this had been advertised by the railway company, in enormous posters stuck up everywhere, the posters showing the aéronaut making a diving leap from the clouds in his parachute.

Though the employment of aéronauts to make ascensions at county fairs, and at summer gatherings of all kinds, has become very common in recent years, so that almost every person has witnessed such an ascension, the fact remains that nothing will so draw a big crowd as flaming announcements of a balloon ascension and a parachute jump from the sky.

But the surprising thing, mentioned in the opening paragraph of this chapter, was the discovery, which came to Jack like a shock, that the daring aéronaut was Capt. Toby Jenkins.

This was a bewildering revelation.

It showed that Capt. Toby had come to Cranford masquerading, bluffing and roaring round for effect, and for the sensation it would create. The whole thing was so amazing that Jack caught himself fairly gasping with astonishment.

And it started anew that old train of thought concerning the bank robbery.

He almost ran now, on his way to the hotel, to get another look at the man who had pretended he was a sea captain.

He found Capt. Toby laughing hilariously in the hotel office, as people came to him telling him what a "sly dog" he was, and how he had fooled them. The man's manner and voice had entirely changed.

"But thim bets, begob?" said Jerry Mulligan, who had heard of this strange thing and had become uneasy. "The bets sthand, Oi'm thinkin' jist the same! Av I win, I want me cash, d'ye see!"

"My good fellow—my good fellow," said Capt. Toby, in his changed voice, as he patted the Irish lad on the shoulder, "if you win the stakes are yours, of course. The clerk has them in his safe."

"But is ut the dacint thing, d'ye think, to fool a felly loike that?" Jerry protested.

"Just a bit of fun—just a bit of fun!" said Capt. Toby, amiably. "What is life without a little hilarity? And if you get your money, it's just as good as if I were a redoubtable mariner straight off the raging main."

"But phy do yeez be betthin' agin' the Cranford nine, I'd loike to know? Ut's parshality yeez do be showin', in doin' ut."

"I bet on Tidewater because I think Tidewater has the best chance to win," said Capt. Toby, in defense.

"The bist chanc't to win? Ut's crazy yeez air!"

"All right, Jerry!" Capt. Toby laughed in great good humor. "Time will tell, you know. And by the way, Jerry, if anything should happen to me, so that I don't get back alive from my journey into the clouds, take that money yourself, and—"

He turned and saw Jack, and extended his hand with a smile.

"Jerry, I retract that; divide it between yourself and our young friend here, who is so cocksure of winning the game this afternoon. You two take it, and go celebrate with it. Drink to my health and my memory, wherever I am."

The captain bubbled with laughter.

"And ut's winnin' the game he will be doin' sure!" Jerry declared, loyally. "There'll be no share fer yeez, captain dear, to divvy wid annybody, I'm thinkin'. An' it will be the iligant game!"

Jack Lightfoot was listening to the voice of Capt. Toby, which had lost its rough roar and had become gentle and kind.

And the thought was hammering away in Jack's brain, that if Capt. Toby could make this transformation it would not be so surprising if he could change himself into a seeming tramp, disguised with that dusty suit of blue.

And now the more he studied Capt. Toby the more

it seemed to him that the man resembled the tramp who had been dragged from that window. As near as Jack could remember, the size of the tramp was about the same as that of Capt. Toby.

Yet, in connecting Reel Snodgrass with that bank robbery, Jack had been forced to connect him with Boralmo, both because Reel was Boralmo's protégé, and by reason of the surprising similarity shown between the scrap of paper which had dropped out of the suit of blue and Boralmo's signature and the signature of Capt. Toby.

But Jack still found it impossible to believe that Capt. Toby was Boralmo, for the thought was securely lodged in his mind that Boralmo was a Hindoo.

Capt. Toby, in changing from the boisterous sea captain, had assumed the name shown on the posters announcing the balloon ascension.

Nevertheless, it will be as well here to continue to call him Capt. Toby and Boralmo. His disguises were many and his aliases innumerable.

Jack wondered blindly why Capt. Toby had chosen to come into Cranford pretending to be a sea captain crazy to make bets.

But Jack did not know the man, and so could not understand him. There was a great vanity at the base of Boralmo's character. In addition, he had all of a genuine fakir's slipperiness and love of pretense. Added to this was a certain romanticism and delight in stage effects, which made him like masquerading and disguises.

The man's character was hollow through and through, and as base and evil as it was hollow.

The surprise shown by the people was now tickling Capt. Toby's terrible vanity, and he was trying to fancy how much greater it would be if they but knew that he was also Boralmo and likewise the tramp who had escaped from the jail and robbed the bank.

It was as good as an ovation to him, to walk through the streets near the hotel and have the people point to him and whisper to each other.

He knew what they were saying—that this was the aéronaut who had come to the place professing to be a roaring old sea captain and a raging betting man; and he chuckled, as he coined for himself the sentences which his fancy told him they were speaking.

Boralmo's career had been wildly adventurous, and at the same time permeated with crime.

He had once been an aéronaut in England, and lately, the old desire striking him, he had been making ascensions in various parts of the United States, dropping for a time his career as a theatrical magician.

Wherever he went, however, he was a thief and a robber. He had been that in England, and in India, and now in the United States. And, marvelous to state, so clever was he that never yet had he done time in any prison for his offenses. This immunity was also flattering to his great vanity.

Whether it was love of Reel or not, something drew him back time and again to Cranford, where Reel was staying.

In his ballooning he had moved slowly in that direction; and by chance was engaged in giving ascensions at a certain resort when invited by the railway passenger agent to make an ascension at Cranford at the time of the ball game.

It was an invitation Capt. Toby would not have refused for any consideration.

It appealed to him, and he saw all of its possibilities; and the reader has seen how he was working out these possibilities.

Once, as Jack Lightfoot stood in the hotel office and listened to Capt. Toby's running talk and hilarious laughter, a certain change of accent attracted him. It was as if the aéronaut had for a moment forgotten that he was playing a part.

A little later, as Capt. Toby walked along the street, viewed by the gaping people, something in his walk, as Jack studied it closely, made the same impression.

Even the best actor will now and again forget his part, or forget that he is playing a part; and so it was with Boralmo, though he was not himself aware of it.

Jack went back home and into the shed room, and there again studied the scrap of writing and thought of all the things that had tended to start his suspicions.

By slow degrees, and almost against his will and his judgment, he was being driven to the conclusion that he had been mistaken in thinking that Boralmo was a Hindoo.

"If it can be possible that Boralmo was not a Hindoo, but was merely masquerading, then the way is clear to these other things. If he could make so good a Hindoo, he could make himself look like these other people. And Capt. Toby shows that he is able to change his appearance. He has changed his manner, and his walk, and his voice, and almost changed the looks of his face; yet I know he is the same man who came pretending to be an old sea captain, for he says it himself. Then, if——"

Thus Jack's thoughts ran; and while it seemed to him that they were merely chasing themselves round in a circle, they were, in fact, slowly hardening into the belief that Capt. Toby was Boralmo, and that he was

the bank robber, and the tramp, and that Reel had been aiding him in the robbery.

But such things, even though they may harden into belief, are far enough from proof, as Jack knew; so he kept his thoughts to himself, though resolved to talk them over with Tom as soon as he and his cousin met again.

CHAPTER IX.

AT THE BALL GROUNDS.

The crowds of people streaming toward the gates of the old fair grounds long before the hour set for the game apprised Jack and his friends of the fact that the attendance that day would be in every manner satisfactory.

"Jiminy crickets, but we'll have a mob there this afternoon!" said Lafe Lampton, when he came to Jack's, to ask him if he was ready to go down to the diamond.

Before Jack and Lafe could get away Ned Skeen came, and little "Gnat" Kimball, together with Jubal Marlin and Wilson Crane.

Nat Kimball carried "Polly," the parrot mascot, and the way Polly was cheering and whooping for "Jack-Lightfoot" and "Cranford" told Jack and the others that Nat and Jubal had been industriously training Polly, and exciting her, so that she might shine that afternoon among the fans.

"By hemlock, if we could jist git her to hold some kind of a banner in her claws!" said Jubal, wishfully. "We tried it down to the gym, but she 'jected and wouldn't do it. But 'twould be great, yeou know, if she'd hold some kind of a streamer in her claws, like the eagle does sometimes in the pictures—a streamer with 'Cranford' printed on it; and all the time her whooping it up tew beat the band! But she wouldn't dew it."

Jubal seemed genuinely aggrieved.

"Rex seems a back number," commented Tom, who had now arrived and joined in the talk.

Rex was the shepherd dog owned by Kate Strawn, and he had been the nine's only mascot until the reappearance of Polly. Always Kate took him to the ball games, so strung and looped with ribbons that he seemed a sort of walking flag.

"I guess Rex is all right," Jack remarked, with a laugh; for, looking up the street, he saw a group of girls coming down toward the lake with the gorgeously ribboned shepherd in their midst.

He beckoned to Tom, while the boys were looking

at Rex, and together they went out behind the shed room, where Jack told him the result, if so it can be called, of some of his latest thinking.

When they returned to the group in the yard there was nothing in their manner to indicate to the boys that they were thinking of anything else but the ball game, so soon to be played.

The other members of the nine, and most of the substitutes, now came down the street in a body, and Jack and his friends went out and joined them, and walked with them on down toward the grounds.

The excursion trains were still pouring their passengers into the Cranford station, and the streets were filled with people coming down to the game.

Yet many of the excursionists, not caring much for baseball, were going to the lake, where there were facilities for boating, and pleasant and shady nooks for picnic lunches and general lounging, for the shores of Cranford Lake were unusually pretty.

The little steamer that made excursion trips to and fro over the lake, and also did a little business for the cottages, was gay with fluttering bunting, and now and then its whistle screamed as it plowed through the blue waters.

Jack was both surprised and gratified, when he beheld the crowds pressing toward the gates, and observed the interest taken in the game by the townspeople.

He had hardly realized how the people of Cranford had identified themselves with the nine and its fortunes. Cranford was filled with strong partisans of the Cranford team, and they were showing their partisanship and their loyalty.

It may seem strange that this should be so; yet it is not at all singular, as a moment's thought will convince anyone.

In the big league games, which attract such attention from one end of our great country to another, a nine bearing the name of, say Cincinnati, will draw to itself the enthusiastic allegiance of all Cincinnati people, even though most of the members of that nine may have their homes in other places. They stand for and represent Cincinnati in the league games.

How much greater and stronger, then, is the loyalty of a town to a nine that lives in it—to a nine made up of the sons of some of its citizens? That nine is more truly representative, and its losses and winnings are watched with the most intense interest.

The Cranford people were always loyal; but never had they seemed more so than on this day, when the battle on the diamond was to decide whether Cran-

ford or Tidewater should have the pennant which had been fought for all summer—the pennant of the Four-Town League.

The pennant—a real one, of rich silk, richly embroidered, and bearing the words in gold letters “Pennant of the Four-Town League”—was fluttering now in front of what had once been the “judges’ stand” of the old fair grounds, but which was now a part of the improvised grand stand; and a committee, consisting of ladies of Cranford and Tidewater, had been selected to give this prize to the winning team at the end of the game.

Mrs. Randolph Livingston, mother of Lily Livingston, had contrived to become one of the members of this committee from Cranford. Mrs. Strawn, Kate Strawn’s mother, was the other Cranford member.

When Jack and his nine and substitutes trotted out upon the diamond for some warming-up work, the roar that broke out told them that their friends were there in force that afternoon; and everywhere the little flags with which the Cranford fans always armed themselves at ball games fluttered in the lake breeze.

A consciousness of what all this meant, and the sight of that fluttering pennant to be fought for that afternoon, fairly caught away Jack’s breath.

Could they win it?

What if they should fail?

For a moment he knew that he trembled.

Then his courage came back to him.

“We must win it!” was his thought.

And that meant, with Jack Lightfoot, that he would fight for it to the last gasp—fight for it until the last ball had sped across the rubber and the last decision had been delivered by the umpire.

CHAPTER X.

SOME THINGS THAT STARTLED JACK.

The folds of the dirty, old balloon in which Capt. Toby Jenkins was to make his ascension from the ball grounds were filling with the hot air driven into the envelope by the fire that roared beneath it, and a great crowd had gathered to see the ascension.

Jack Lightfoot, and Tom, and some of the other members of the nine walked over to where the balloon was filling, after they had thrown the ball about on the diamond and familiarized themselves again with the old place.

The Tidewater boys were slamming the ball around in warming-up practice, and for the purpose of getting

the hang of the diamond, as Jack and his friends went over to the balloon, which was not far distant.

Capt. Toby saw them coming, and greeted them with an air of assumed jocularity.

“I was beginning to think you weren’t paying me the respect that is my due!” he cried, reaching out to Jack and shaking his hand as if he had found a long-lost brother. “Here I’ve been delaying things, just waiting for you to come! The crowd is here, though.”

He swept his hand round indicatively.

The other boys began to give their attention to the balloon.

As has been said, Jack Lightfoot’s suspicions had been slowly hardening into mental certainties.

He did not know, of course, with absolute knowledge, that this man was Boralmo, but he was beginning to believe that he was; and he wanted something in the way of a test.

So, now, looking Capt. Toby firmly in the eye—he had already observed that Capt. Toby’s eyes were very dark, almost, if not quite, black—he said:

“Capt. Jenkins, I wish you would tell me frankly just why you chose to come to Cranford in disguise?”

Jack could almost fancy that he saw spots of red leap into existence behind those dark eyes.

“I—I don’t understand you!” Capt. Toby exclaimed, evidently somewhat taken aback.

“I mean last evening,” said Jack, “when you claimed to come from Tidewater, and to be a sea captain crazy to make bets on Tidewater?”

“Oh!”

The relief in Capt. Toby’s face was more expressive than that exclamation.

“Oh! I did that just for advertising purposes, you see. I thought it would stir up an interest; and it did, a tremendous interest. And you see what an amount of advertising it is going to give me. That little joke will be told in all the newspapers. It is already in the *Cardiff Guardian*. Maybe you’ve seen the *Guardian* to-day. I have a copy here.”

He pulled the copy from the little leather bag that rested by him on the ground, and held up the *Guardian*, showing Mack Remington’s latest letter, in the *Guardian’s* latest edition.

“That will be repeated everywhere, you know,” said Capt. Toby, in a beaming manner, “and I shall have a tremendous lot of free advertising.”

Now that the stream of his eloquence had been thus

tapped, Capt. Toby threatened, like Tennyson's "Brook," to go on forever.

But the hot-air bag of the balloon was filling, and the impatient people were showing their impatience.

Capt. Toby folded the paper and put it back in the bag.

"Capt. Jenkins," said Jack, again boring him with his keen, blue-gray eyes, "did you ever hear of Boralmo?"

Capt. Toby, at that, fell back with a gasp; but caught himself.

"Never, sir!" he said, with assumed cheerfulness.

"I think you have," said Jack, sarcastically; and turned to walk away.

He saw that he had frightened the balloonist.

"And if he doesn't know the name of Boralmo, why should he be frightened?" was Jack's inner question.

The answer was easy, and it drove conviction to the soul of Jack Lightfoot:

This man was indeed himself Boralmo!

And if Boralmo, thought Jack, what more likely than that he had been in the bank when Reel was walking the street in front of it whistling "God Save the King"? and what more likely than that he had entered it in the disguise of a tramp, or had turned himself into the semblance of a tramp after entering it by utilizing the janitor's dirty and dusty suit of blue?

"Tom," said Jack, his voice trembling, "I'm sure he's the man! What shall we do? Kennedy isn't here!"

"One of his deputies is," Tom answered. "He was right over there a while ago."

Kennedy was away, hunting for the "tramp"; but he had appointed a number of deputies to look after the crowd at the ball game, and these deputies were authorized to make arrests.

When Jack looked back he saw that Capt. Toby was feverishly hastening the progress of the work of filling the balloon bag.

"You think we'd better order his arrest, don't you?" said Jack, speaking to Tom.

"I've been thinking of that. Perhaps we'd better wait until after the ball game and the balloon ascension."

"And give him a chance to get away?"

"All that goes up must come down!" said Tom. "He's got to come down, even if he does make his ascension; and he could be pulled then. Besides," he added, "it would spoil the ascension if he was arrested now."

"Let's find one of those deputies," Jack suggested. They went in search of an officer.

But the crowd was large, and apparently the only way to find where one of those deputies was would have been to start a riot or a fight; they certainly kept out of sight of Jack and Tom.

Finally the two youths turned back toward the balloon.

"I'm going to have another word with him, anyway! And I want you to be with me, to see what you think of his actions. I'll shoot something at him again, just as I did when I asked him if he knew Boralmo."

Jack hurried rapidly now, with Tom right at his heels, for he saw that the balloon was almost ready to mount into the air.

Boralmo beheld them coming, saw the haste with which they moved along—they were almost running—and it frightened him.

Though the balloon bag was not quite filled, he ordered the ropes cast off; and, swinging into the little car that hung below the bag, he cut away the last rope with a hatchet, and shot into the air.

He was convinced that if he had tarried another minute these determined youths would have stopped him, and then would have brought about his arrest. Hence his precipitate haste.

He had but a little while before been scribbling something, which he had meant to give to Reel Snodgrass, whom he saw at a little distance from him in the crowd; and he had mentally been cursing Reel because he had not come nearer, so that he could speak with him.

This bit of paper now fluttered out of his hands, dislodged by the haste he had made, and it blew straight toward Jack and Tom, but also toward Reel, who was some yards in front of them.

Boralmo motioned wildly to Reel, meaning for him to get the note, but Reel, being shoved by some one in the crowd at that exciting instant, had not seen the paper, and did not now understand the signal.

But Jack had seen it, and as it fluttered on toward him he resolved to get it.

Tom had also seen it, but now he saw another paper flutter downward from the hands of the aéronaut, who was already high over the ball grounds.

Many people, in fact, nearly all, thought these pa-

pers were only slips thrown out for effect. Tom and Jack did not know but they were, yet were determined to see; and, while Tom hurried to get the second which had fallen, Jack tried to get the first.

The paper Tom was dashing for dropped down into the crowd before he could reach it; but Jack had better fortune.

That which Jack secured held these words, addressed to Reel Snodgrass, though Reel's name did not appear on it:

"That young hound has recognized me and will try to bring about my arrest. I think it will be wise for you to show him those papers."

The second paper which had fallen from the balloon was found by Tom in the hands of a man belonging in Cranford, who turned it over to him cheerfully enough:

It read:

"To the Clerk of the Cranford House.

"If I don't get back from this trip alive, and Tidewater wins the game, give my winnings to the clever captain of the Cranford nine, Mr. Jack Lightfoot."

This was signed by the name Boralmo used as a balloonist.

Tom saw at a glance the deadly character of this "gift."

If the game that afternoon should be lost and Jack could in any manner be charged with that loss, people would say he had lost it that he might get those winnings, to be paid to him if Tidewater won.

It was a stroke worthy even of Boralmo.

The people were watching the rising balloon, a roar ascending from the crowd something like the low roar of the sea.

Jack looked at the balloon, too, and watched it ascending steadily, and wondered about the words on that bit of paper, then it was caught by a current of air and swung toward the sea in the direction of Tidewater.

The people were expecting to behold the balloonist make his parachute leap.

"It will come down before it gets to Tidewater," was Jack's thought; "for it's only a hot-air balloon and can't stay up long. I wonder—"

Tom came up and clapped him on the shoulder.

"See what you've inherited—if he don't come back!" he cried, laying in Jack's hand the second paper sent by Boralmo. "Why, you'll be rich—if Cranford fails to win this afternoon!"

He spoke jocularly, yet his face was grave.

The balloon rose still higher, and swept across the lower end of the lake, and then on, above the Malapan River, in the direction of the sea; but it seemed to be descending after a while, and some of the spectators began to say they believed it would fall into the river.

And still the balloonist had not used his parachute.

The woods at the lower end of the lake now shut it from the view of the people; and their interest in the ball game, as the next thing on the program, reasserted itself.

Yet they had been greatly disappointed. The parachute leap advertised had been omitted.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GAME OPENS.

Jack's face had whitened to the color of chalk just before the umpire put the ball in play.

He had turned that first note, meant for Reel Snodgrass, over, a thing he had not thought to do before, and had read there, on the back of it, his father's name, with other matter that choked him.

Jack was now wild to go for Kennedy, and have Kennedy try to find the aéronaut and arrest him, for Jack wanted to pin him down with questions.

He had all the proofs now he wanted, not the least of them being Capt. Toby's failure to use the parachute.

The thoughts that roared now in Jack's head made it almost impossible for him to think of the game that must be played.

He wanted to rush from the ball ground and make that search for the aéronaut himself, being sure now that the man was Boralmo, and that he would not return to the place; and he wanted, also, to find Reel Snodgrass and question him.

Some of the people were prophesying that the balloon would drive on eastward until it fell into the

ocean, for the breeze in that direction had set in strong, in the upper air currents, as the direction and progress of the balloon had shown.

Then the Cranford cheer rang out from the Cranford fans, and Jack heard "Polly" tune up in the benches, where Nat sat with her and encouraged her.

And Jack beheld the fluttering of the flags; and saw his sister, Daisy, sitting with the Cranford girls and looking toward the diamond.

Yet his eyes were blurred, so that he really did not see anything well.

He heard the boys talking to him, as they gathered about him.

Cranford, playing on its home ground, was to go first to the bat, unless they chose to do otherwise.

Then he heard the voice of the umpire shouting:

"Play ball!"

He saw the clean, white globe thrown by the umpire to the pitcher.

And he heard the umpire call the name of Tom Lightfoot, the first of the Cranford nine to go to the bat.

The game was on, and it had to be played; the people were there to see it; they were roaring their delight; Polly and the fans were cheering; the boys of the nine were anxious for this final battle with Tidewater, and Jack was the captain and leader of the nine.

His duty was there—it was his duty to lead the nine to victory!

Yet he sat in the benches, thinking the thing over, as the game opened up, and he heard the Cranford fans singing in the bleachers, where they had massed.

"These things can be looked into after the game," thought Jack. "The game has got to be played now."

Yet his heart was not in it, and he could not get his mind down to the work that was bringing such cheers from the fans, for Tom Lightfoot had straight off connected with one of Kid Casey's hot ones, and had lined it out toward the ball-field fence, making a two-bagger.

"Brodie Strawn!" called the umpire.

And the batting slugger of the Cranford nine stepped into position, fully realizing that Cranford was that day playing for the pennant.

The lineup of the two teams was as follows:

CRANFORD.	TIDEWATER.
Tom Lightfoot, 2d b.	Ben Talbot, ss.
Brodie Strawn, 1st b.	Joe Bowers, 1st b.
Mack Remington, rf.	Kid Casey, p.
Phil Kirtland, 3d b.	Silas Cross, 2d b.
Jubal Marlin, lf.	Jim Lane, c.
Wilson Crane, cf.	Paul Lockwood, lf.
Lafe Lampton, c.	Sidney Talbot, cf.
Ned Skeen, ss.	George Steele, 3d b.
Jack Lightfoot, p.	Mason King, rf.

Kid Casey, the pitcher for Tidewater, was one of the best on the amateur diamond, and Jack had already had many battles with him.

The Cranford boys believed, what they had never been able to prove, that Kid Casey was a professional.

It was one of Casey's ambitions to strike out Brodie Strawn, for Brodie had the reputation of being about the best and hardest hitter on the Cranford nine.

To strike out Brodie, Casey began to throw wide curves, which he tried to put over the corner of the rubber.

They were "balls," and Brodie, who was a "waiter," and not easily confused, simply waited.

Then Casey changed, with lightning swiftness, and sent in some drops.

One of these slugger hammered out.

It had been low, however, and in "lifting" it he had lifted it too high.

It went into left field, and Paul Lockwood made a great backward run and smothered it.

Brodies' dark face flushed, for he was out.

After him, at the bat, came Macklin Remington, the oracular, whose ambitions ran to newspaper work and telegraphy.

"Pap says that the way to do a thing is to do it!" declared Macklin, his apple-red cheeks taking on added color as he faced the redoubtable Casey.

Then Mack showed the world "how to do it" by striking out.

Tom was still frozen at second bag when Phil Kirtland came into position, at the call of the umpire.

The Tidewater fans were roaring, for two men were already out.

The spectators seemed already to have forgotten the balloonist, over whose danger they had been exercised so short a while before.

When last seen, he had been drifting toward the sea, and the fact that he had not used his parachute made them believe that something was the matter with it and that he could not get down from the balloon.

But, apparently, that was all forgotten now, when they saw Phil Kirtland step into the batter's place and beheld Kid Casey wind up to send the ball over the rubber.

"One strike!" said the umpire, as the ball plunked into the catcher's mitt.

Was Phil going to strike out?

The Cranford fans roared their encouragement, and Polly cackled her "hurrah."

Yet there was one thing about Polly's cheering that had never wholly pleased Phil, and which made him consider her rather a poor mascot. She always coupled Jack Lightfoot's name with Cranford, and Phil and Jack had often been at loggerheads. But that was not Polly's fault, if fault it was, but the fault of the Yankee lad, Jubal Marlin, who had taught her.

Again the ball came in.

Thump! it sounded as it struck in the catcher's mitt.

"Two strikes!" called the umpire, and the Tidewater fans roared again.

Then—crack!

Phil had connected, and Tom Lightfoot was going like a race horse from second.

The Cranford fans came to their feet with a wild yell, as Tom passed third and started for home.

Jack had leaped up and run down the line to coach him in.

"Go—go—go!" he screamed, for he saw that the fielder had the ball and was swinging his arm for the throw.

The ball came shooting in to the catcher, who was in position for it.

"Slide!" Jack yelled.

Tom threw himself in a great slide.

"Safe!" yelled the umpire, as the ball smacked into the catcher's mitt.

One run had been made, and Phil Kirtland was perched on second.

"Naow—naow—hoopla! The elephant goes raound and raound, and the band begins tew play!"

It was the war cry of Jubal Marlin, as he pranced into place and put himself in position for a "south-paw" swing.

Though Jubal was not the best batter on the nine, Kid Casey would have been willing to see almost any other fellow there, for Jubal was left-handed, and left-handed batters troubled Casey.

He stood twisting the ball round in his fingers, watching Phil on second, and then sent the ball over for Jubal.

Crack!

The ball shot off the upper side of the bat and went in a whizzing spiral into the air and into the catcher's mitt.

The side was out.

Yet that first half had been lively, and had set the fans to roaring, and for a time it seemed to have awakened Jack Lightfoot from the spell that appeared to have seized him.

CHAPTER XII.

JACK "GOES UP IN A BALLOON."

A number of people had seen that writing, dropped by Boralmo, which Tom had secured, though it had not first landed in his hands.

It read:

"To the Clerk of the Cranford House.

"If I don't get back from this trip alive, and Tidewater wins the game, give my winnings to the clever captain of the Cranford nine, Mr. Jack Lightfoot."

From the first Jack began to show poor work. He seemed to have lost his grip. He twice lost control of the spit ball, and then gave up its use. And twice he let runners steal bases when he should have put them out.

The general work of the nine was fine, however, so that Tidewater was held down pretty well.

Yet by the time three innings had been played Tidewater was two runs in the lead, with the score cards showing five for Tidewater and three for Cranford.

The fans and the singers had whooped and sung themselves hoarse in their efforts to cheer the nine.

Yet the fear was growing that Cranford was going to lose the pennant that day.

And now some of them began to shout unkind things at Jack, yelling to him to get out of the box, and asking him if he, too, had gone up in a balloon, and criticising him generally.

This is one of the hardest things with which a pitcher—in fact, any player—has to deal; the loss of faith which seems to come so quickly, even to friends, when poor work is being done or errors are being made.

The partisans of Phil Kirtland, and Phil had many friends, were chief in making these derisive calls and cries.

The thing stung Jack to the quick. He knew he was doing poor work, and he knew the reason, though, of course, they did not.

That the reader may know what it was more clearly, a bit of history needs to be rehearsed.

Jack's father had gone to the Klondike, at the time of the great gold excitement in 1897. There he had met poor success, and, later, falling in with a sailor who told alluring and wild stories of certain pearl islands in the South Pacific, where fortunes could be made easily, Jack's father, and others, had chartered a crazy old schooner and had sailed away for these islands.

That was six years and more ago now, and from the time of the sailing not a word had come from Mr. Lightfoot.

Jack's mother had hoped against hope, as the years went by, feeling that her husband must be dead, yet refusing to believe it, clinging with a wildness and yearning that cannot be described to the hope which her reason told her was almost without foundation.

And now on that scrap of paper which had fallen from the hand of a man whom Jack was convinced was Boralmo was the name of Jack's father.

Apparently, from the way it had been set down there, with other words that had no meaning for Jack, Boralmo had not intended to use that bit of paper in writing the note he meant for Reel, but had done so inadvertently.

Jack knew that Boralmo and Reel Snodgrass had come from Bombay.

No doubt they had crossed the Pacific in doing so. Was it possible, then, that they had fallen in with Jack's father, or had heard from him, or of him?

And what did those words mean on the paper apparently intended for Reel—those words which read:

"I think it will be well for you to show him those papers."

From the context, the "him" mentioned here was Jack Lightfoot.

What were in those papers?

Reel was not to be seen on the grounds, and perhaps had departed, for Jack's roving eyes had not been able to locate him.

The game had begun before Jack could make any investigation.

Because of these things, thought of his father was whirling like a mill wheel in his brain, even while he was trying to play baseball, and play it in a way to win the pennant.

Jack was beginning to think that he had better get out of the box, thus complying with the demand of some of those shouters, and let Phil Kirtland take his place.

Tom Lightfoot came to him.

"Jack," he said, and he said it earnestly, "you've got to take a brace! We're going to lose this game if you don't. Do you know what a good many of the people are saying?"

"What?" said Jack.

His face was red and his heart was pounding heavily.

"They're saying that you're trying to lose the game for Cranford, so that you can get the money the aeronaut wrote about—the betting money in the safe at the Cranford House. I know better, but they're saying it, and some of them are beginning to believe it. You'll have to pull yourself together, or get out of the box."

Jack's face changed from red to white.

"I'll take a brace," he said, quietly, and Tom went away, but continued to watch him.

"Yes, I must do better, or give way to Phil," was his thought. "This isn't right to the Cranford nine, and to the Cranford people; I've got to brace up!"

CHAPTER XIII.

JACK GETS INTO GEAR.

Jack had been only proving what has been so often declared in these stories, that no one can play ball successfully who does not put his whole soul into it.

His mind had been divided between thoughts of the work cut out for him and thoughts of his father.

He saw that it would take the utmost exertion of his will power to exclude thoughts of his father and of Reel and Boralmo, but that he must do it or run the chance of losing the game.

It was not stubborn pride that kept Jack from at once surrendering his place to Phil Kirtland, though Jack had quite as much pride as was good for him, though he had very little stubbornness.

He knew that when he played in his usual form he was a far better pitcher than Phil. He feared Phil would cause the nine to lose the pennant. Yet, as Tom had told him quite frankly, he was likely himself to cause the nine to lose the pennant.

By a mighty exertion of will power Jack now tried to turn all his thoughts to the game.

He resolved that none of the people should say of him, and perhaps believe it, that he had lost the game through a desire to secure that money in the safe of the Cranford House, because he believed the balloonist had probably lost his life in the Atlantic.

The very thought that people could suggest such a thing, even though they had color for it, made Jack's cheeks burn.

But this was thinking of other things than the game, and he now put even that out of his mind.

He was in the pitcher's box, and the nine had just been retired to the field without making a run.

Jack pulled himself together, and it was, in its result, as if he had aroused from a bad dream, for he now struck out three men.

The fifth inning was to begin, with Ned Skeen at the bat.

"Howling mackerels, fellows, we've got to do something at the bat now!" he sputtered.

"You've got the fust chance!" said Jubal, with a grin. "Bring yourself in with a homer."

Ned slashed nervously at Casey's first pitched ball, and then slashed again. Both were "strikes."

"Howling mackerels!" he grunted, and deliberately spat on his hands, to enable him to get a new "grip."

Then, to his own no small wonder, as well as to that of his friends, Ned cracked out a great liner, well down toward the ball-ground fence.

Ned flew for first, then on to second, and then started for third, but was driven back to second for safety.

"Howling mackerels, I ought to have taken three bags on that!" he grumbled to himself, as he began to play off second, wondering if he dared try Casey for a steal.

"Jack's to come to the bat now, and maybe he can get me home!"

Jack was at the bat.

He heard the yelling of the fans, who were encouraged anew by his recent success in the box and by the luck of Ned Skeen, and were hoping that the tide had turned permanently in favor of Cranford.

Jack also saw the girls in the grand stand and the flags that fluttered forth such a mass of color.

"The game's got to be won," he said to himself, and he set his teeth hard.

Kid Casey shot the ball over.

It did not please Jack and he let it go by, though the umpire called it a "strike."

Then Jack lifted another liner out toward the ball-ground fence, and Ned Skeen came home, the happiest young fellow on the grounds that day, while Jack, running like a greyhound, passed second and fairly flew for third.

The fans were again screaming, the flags were fluttering and Polly was "hurrahing."

Jack gained third just a moment before the ball struck in the hands of the third baseman.

"A run, fellows; a run for me!" yelled Ned Skeen. "Howling mackerels, how was that? Didn't you see me fly?"

But the attention was now centered upon Jack on third, and on Tom Lightfoot, who was at the bat.

Tom secured a single, which enabled Jack to score.

But Tom did not get home, and the run getting for Cranford that inning ended.

Yet two runs had been brought in, and the score had been tied, and was now five to five.

The Tidewater batters had long before learned to fear Jack Lightfoot's pitching, yet thus far in the game they had not seen anything to be much afraid of.

But now they felt a little bewildered, and their old fear of him came back when he put the spit ball into play again, and with his old-time fire and speed again struck three men out straight.

Ned Skeen yelled like a Comanche and turned a cart-wheel, as he came in from short to the benches, and every member of the nine was now in a mood of roaring confidence.

"You're all right, Jack!" shouted Lafe. "We've got 'em to going now!"

But Kid Casey showed that he was himself no "small potatoes" when it came to pitching. Jack's performance fired his heart and nerved his arm, and he duplicated Jack's work, sending down before him Phil Kirtland, Jubal Marlin and Wilson Crane.

"Say, you fellers!" said Jubal, good humoredly, howling at Casey. "Ain't yeou pitchers goin' ter let any other members of the nines do nothin'?"

It began to seem that they were not, for a lively pitchers' battle had opened.

One man took a base while Jack was in the box, but he got no further than first.

Then Kid Casey, though two bases were filled—by Lafe Lampton and by Jack Lightfoot—held the runners on the bases until he had struck out the third man and retired the side.

Jack went again into the box, and once more mowed down his three men.

The thing was not as spectacular as when long drives are made into the outfield and runners fairly tear up the base lines and fielders tie knots in their legs and make high and low dives in trying to get the ball, but the Cranford people and the rooters from Tidewater were able to appreciate any form of fine playing, and they rooted vigorously, while, under the coaching of Nat Kimball, it seemed that Polly would split her throat.

Then the eighth inning opened, with Brodie Strawn at the bat.

The people had apparently forgotten all about the flight of the aeronaut toward the ocean, and Jack's mind was now so taken with the game and his determination to win the pennant for Cranford that he had no further trouble in keeping it on the work in hand.

Brodie now hammered out a drop curve for three bags to right center.

Mack Remington, declaring again that the way to do a thing is to do it, scratched one into the left, bringing Brodie home.

And Phil Kirtland, coming again to the bat, got a good lick over second which took him down to first base.

But it put Mack out at second, for he was forced.

Then Jubal knocked a captured fly, and Wilson Crane duplicated this so cleverly that it almost seemed that he had studied for it, and that made two more men out, and the side out.

But Brodie's run was safe on the score card, and that put the Cranford nine one run in the lead.

"Now see us even things!" said Casey, as he and the Tidewater boys went to the bat.

But Jack was there again with the spit ball, and Casey, who was the first man up, was also the first man down.

Some of the Cranford fans tried to sing that irritating song about how mighty Casey was struck out, and others tried to howl something to the effect that "Casey wouldn't dance with the strawberry blonde, but the band played on," but these efforts were only heard by limited circles of hearers, for the yells banging to the blue sky were so tremendous that singing was out of the question.

Silas Cross secured a scratch hit and went to first, and that brought up to the rubber Jim Lane, catcher and captain of the Tidewater nine, who was as good a batsman as he was a catcher.

The Tidewater fans cheered Lane, and told him he was a "good boy," and had a "great eye" and that he could "do it," with other pleasant remarks and compliments which they hoped would cheer him so much that he couldn't miss even a bullet fired across the rubber.

But Lane was nervous.

He saw that pennant flying in front of the grand stand.

The finish of the great fight for that pennant was near at hand.

"One strike!" shouted the umpire.

For the spit ball had come in and dropped with a great dive at the plate, and Lane had swung over it.

Lane took a new grip of the bat, as he saw Jack again winding up.

He was sure that this would be the spit ball again, with that terrific and puzzling drop.

The wind-up seemed just the same, but that was one of Jack's little tricks to fool the batter.

The ball that came was a spit ball, to be sure, but it had an in-shoot to it that was most deceptive. Lane swung at it, knowing he had missed it when it was too late.

"Two strikes!"

Lane resolved not to be fooled the next time; he would be ready for "any old thing that came along."

It was a slow drop this time, in front of the plate, but Lane reached for it, with a do-or-die air, and he got it.

Yet he lifted it high.

It went upward with a humming, spiral twist, sounding just like a big top, and shot over the head of the shortstop.

Ned Skeen fairly turned a somersault in his efforts to get back and under it, but it struck the ground before he could get there, and when he reached out his hands to catch it on the bounce it whizzed wildly to one side, still spinning, and he had to run after it.

Other people were doing some running now—the runners on the base lines—and Silas Cross gained third, though Lane, in trying to take second, was put out by Skeen's throw to Tom Lightfoot.

It was lively and exciting for a few minutes, and the hoarse fans yelled as if the game were just beginning.

Two men were out, but Silas Cross was on third, and one of the safest batters for Tidewater took up the timber now; Paul Lockwood.

Lafe signaled to Jack "to send 'em in hot," know-

ing that air burners were the hardest for Lockwood to handle.

Cross, on third bag, was hoping that Lafe would let one of those hot curves go through his mitt and so give him a chance to go home.

Jack was making great use of the spit ball.

He sent the air burners in, with such stinging speed that he wondered that Lafe could hold them, yet reliable Lafe was there all the time, and nothing passed him.

On the fourth pitched ball, when two strikes had been called, Lockwood connected with one of those high spiral drives, made by striking the under side of the ball while it was revolving in a swift curve.

Skeen got under this one, but Cross was going for the plate, for that offered a chance, if Skeen muffed.

And perhaps because that was in his mind, or because he was so much excited, Skeen muffed, and Cross sped across the rubber, safe, adding another run, and the score was again tied, being now six to six.

Then Jack struck out Sidney Talbot.

CHAPTER XIV.

WINNING THE PENNANT.

The ninth inning opened in a whirl of excitement. The scores were tied.

Lafe Lampton was first at the rubber with Old Wagon Tongue.

Kid Casey was trying to "pull himself together" that he might strike out Lafe.

Lafe heard the Cranford fans bellowing, and with great deliberation he pulled a red apple out of his pocket and deliberately took a bite, then hitched his trousers and again gripped the bat.

A yell greeted this performance, and Lafe smiled one of his humorous smiles, while his sky-blue eyes sparkled.

"Lafe, you're all there!" some enthusiastic rooter called to him. "Now show 'em how we do things in Cranford!"

Lafe seemed bound to obey orders.

He let one of Casey's hot curves go by, and slashed at another which he missed; then he lifted the ball for the outfield and leaped for first bag.

Again the Cranford fans howled and the Cranford flags fluttered.

Sidney Talbot was in center field, where the ball had gone, and while Lafe was flying along the base line Sidney made a great leap into the air, struck the ball with the tip of his fingers and turned head over heels.

Lafe went on to second, and then started for third.

Sidney had gathered himself together and learned that he was still all in one piece, then had grabbed the ball from the ground and slammed it to the shortstop, who had run out to get it.

It smacked into the hands of short, and the latter whizzed it to third, but reliable Lafe was again lucky and ahead of the ball.

"Keep 'er goin'!" yelled Jubal, laughing uproariously.

Ned Skeen came to the bat, his name called by the umpire.

Polly was again screeching wildly, as if she knew this was Cranford's batting half of the ninth and that they must do something or agree that they couldn't.

But the Cranford fans were not doing all the yelling. Tidewater was howling, too, having, also, a realizing sense that things were very close and ticklish, and that a little "luck," or a little slip, might send that much-desired pennant to one side or the other.

Lafe was on third when Skeen took up the timber.

"Steady, Ned!" called Jack, softly, for he saw that Ned was shaking like an aspen in a gale of wind.

Ned was so nervous that he said, afterward, he could hardly see, and that is not a good condition for a batsman to be in.

Casey put on steam, and nervous Ned went out before those terrific curves.

"One man out!" yelled the Tidewater fans, and they screamed their joy, some of them standing up, as if that would add to the power of their lungs.

Ned slammed Old Wagon Tongue on the ground as if he had a personal grievance against the old bat, though anyone will agree that the bat was not to blame, and he went back to his seat in the benches very red in the face, with a whole throatful of "Howling mackerels!" gurgling for utterance.

After Ned Skeen came Jack Lightfoot, with Lafe still on third bag.

Jack's face was red, and he had an uncomfortable feeling that his heart was beating all too wildly.

Yet once more he pulled his courage together, resolving to get one of those swift curves if it was within the range of possibilities.

Even Lafe, cool as he usually was, was dancing out from third in a way to show that he, too, was nervous and overanxious.

Casey wound up and shot over a curve that just shaved the corner of the rubber.

Jack did not like it, and let it go by, hoping it was a "ball," but it was a "strike."

Again Kid Casey made that terrific wind-up and sent the ball in.

That, too, was a fierce curve.

But—crack!

Jack reached for it, and connected, and, dropping the bat as soon as it struck the ball, he leaped for first, while Lafe, even before bat and ball collided, was jumping along the third-base line for home, with all the Cranford fans standing on their feet now, howling as if they were lunatics just escaped from some asylum.

Jack's line drive had gone into deep right, and he went to second and then on toward third, while Wilson Crane had run down to third to coach.

The fielder with the ball was at Jack's back.

"Slide!" Wilson screamed, making vigorous motions with his hands. "Slide—slide!"

Jack threw himself in a terrific slide, fairly shooting through the air, headfirst, toward the bag.

He seemed so like a comet, coming in that manner, that the man on the bag sidestepped to get out of the way.

Smack!

The ball was in the bagman's mitt.

"Safe on third!" roared the umpire.

Then the Cranford fans howled again, and little Nat, standing up, with Polly elevated on his shoulder, held her up thus, so that her croaking "hurrahs" would sound all the louder, for they were really quite drowned

out in the other din that was sweeping over the ball field.

Jack was on third, and Lafe had brought in a run.

Tom Lightfoot—"Safe old Tom," the boys sometimes called him—came to the bat.

Kid Casey's face was as red as fire.

He felt that he was being pounded in this, which was perhaps his last, chance in the game to do his wizard work in the pitcher's box, for he was "Wizard Casey, of the Four-Town League," and he believed himself to be the greatest pitcher in the league.

Perhaps because this made Casey somewhat shaky, Tom Lightfoot got the first ball that came over.

It was but a scratch hit, from a spiral that twisted down the first-base line.

But, fortunately for Tom and Jack, the right fielder had gone well back, believing that if Tom got the ball at all he would drive it out.

Therefore the first bagman had to run for the ball, and before he had time to get back with it, or the second baseman or pitcher could get into place to cover first, Tom was safe on first.

As a matter of fact, however, though the pitcher and second baseman ran to cover first, the first baseman, seeing that Tom would get there, shot the ball to the plate.

But Jack Lightfoot, coached by Lafe, had made another glorious slide, and was declared safe by the umpire.

In the resultant hurly-burly Tom took second before the ball could be shot to second to cut him off there.

Brodie Strawn now hammered out one of those high spirals which he had unfortunately been indulging in throughout the game, and was put out.

Then Casey struck out Mack Remington.

The side was out.

But it had pulled two runs across the rubber in that half of the inning, and Cranford was now two runs in the lead.

"Fellows, we can do 'em!" yelled Casey, his face aflame.

And the Tidewater boys went to the bat in the second half of the inning to make Casey's boast good and "do 'em."

But Jack Lightfoot was like Richard of old—he was "himself again."

And, with an eye that was true, a nerve that was steady and an arm that had not lost its cunning, he once more struck out his three men straight.

The howl that floated from the Cranford fans in grand stand and bleachers and out on the field was now one wild yell of victory.

For Cranford had won!

The pennant was theirs!

Lafe took Jack by the arm and walked with him to a position in front of the grand stand. All the nine lined up there. And Mrs. Norwell Strawn, mother of Brodie and Kate—Jack was glad that it was Mrs. Strawn instead of Mrs. Livingston—presented to the nine the beautiful pennant and complimented them upon the splendid work done on the diamond that day.

Then the enthusiastic members of the nine, led by Lafe Lampton and Tom Lightfoot, picked Jack up bodily, despite his protestations, and lifted him to their shoulders, while they howled their joy and the Cranford fans sang, to the tune of "John Brown's Body":

"We've won the bimmed old pennant, in the battle of to-day!
Wow! We are marching on!"

It was Jack Lightfoot's hour of triumph, and in spite of his protests the uproarious and good-natured crowd carried him off the field.

* * * * *

The balloonist, Boralmo in disguise, was not found, and as he did not return to claim the money he was to receive for making the ascension, the papers reported that he had doubtless drifted out to sea in his balloon and been drowned.

THE END.

What the name of Jack's father on the back of the slip of paper signified, and what the sentence meant which referred to certain papers, will be unfolded in next week's number, No. 36, "Jack Lightfoot's Pledge; or, Bound in Honor," which will be found a remarkable story, full of intense interest, and containing certain matters concerning Jack and his father which you should not fail to know. Be sure to read it.

A CHAT WITH YOU

Under this general head we purpose each week to sit around the camp fire, and have a heart-to-heart talk with those of our young readers who care to gather there, answering such letters as may reach us asking for information with regard to various healthy sports, both indoor and out. We should also be glad to hear what you think of the leading characters in your favorite publication. It is the editor's desire to make this department one that will be eagerly read from week to week by every admirer of the Jack Lightfoot stories, and prove to be of valuable assistance in building up manly, healthy Sons of America. All letters received will be answered immediately, but may not appear in print under five weeks, owing to the fact that the publication must go to press far in advance of the date of issue. Those who favor us with correspondence will please bear this in mind, and exercise a little patience.

THE EDITOR.

I have read your interesting weekly from No. 1 up, and I think it very fine. Please answer these questions and oblige. Age, 15 years; weight, 120 pounds; height, 5 feet 5 inches; chest, 32 inches; expanded, 33½ inches; biceps, 10 inches; calf, 12½ inches; neck, 12½ inches; waist, 27½ inches; wrist, 6 inches.

34 Clinton Avenue, Jersey City, N. J. "LAFE LAMPTON."

Your weight is over the average, but you fall short an inch or more in chest measurement, which you should endeavor to gain. Around the waist you excel; but then, we expect this in a growing lad, with the ordinary love for good "grub."

I have been a reader of the ALL-SPORTS from No. 1 to the present. I thought I would write and let you know that every boy in Houston that has read the ALL-SPORTS simply thinks it's grand. As for Jack Lightfoot, I think he makes a good captain for the Cranford nine. He is not like another character we read about in a so-called athletic library, who bosses his players around like he hired them. I would have written to that other publication about this, but it is no good, and I wouldn't waste paper to let them know my sentiments. My favorites are ALL-SPORTS and *Tip Top*. I wish to ask you a few questions. 1. If an infielder touches a hot liner and lets it go by, and don't get the fellow out that is running to first, is that an error? 2. If you run after a foul in the air and touch it, and miss holding it, that isn't counted an error, is it? Hoping to see this letter in print, I will close. Hope Mr. Stevens will live a long time. My best regards to Mr. Stevens and ALL-SPORTS,

WHITE.

1912 Capitol Avenue, Houston, Tex.

1. If an infielder touches a batted ball, and fails to hold it, as a usual thing an error may be charged against him; but there occur many cases where he took great chances in trying to stop the ball, and the official scorer is kind to such a man. It is better to try for everything and make errors than to shirk hot liners.

2. The dropping of a foul by the catcher is not necessarily an error. Perhaps this is because these erratic balls are so hard to get that the poor catcher, who has plenty of other chances for making errors, would be making a bad showing continually in the error column.

Being an ardent admirer of your great weekly, ALL-SPORTS, and having read nearly every other publication of its kind on the market to-day, I take the liberty of writing this letter to you, to express my opinion of both the novel itself and the author. I consider the ALL-SPORTS WEEKLY the best five-cent publication printed to-day, not even excepting the famous *Tip Top*. These two books are the only ones which ought to be allowed to be printed. What the American youth of to-day needs, above all other things, to successfully fight the battle of life, is a good physical constitution, together with an honest and courageous determination to do right, and not how to be an

adept in the use of firearms of all kinds and descriptions, and the trailing of bank thieves and murderers. Health is what they want, something that can only be obtained in youth, and which is the greatest gift on earth. Therefore, good athletic stories, containing now and then a spice of mystery and adventure of the same order, is what we need; and I am sure that a true American lad will appreciate this kind of literature. What boy is there in the United States who does not take an interest of some sort in some branch of athletics? Athletics is one of the few things in existence that breeds competition, and competition is the best stimulant in the world to spur one on to his greatest ability. Hence, we don't want to read about things that are beyond human accomplishment and are totally unbeneficial. Two men have responded to this great necessity nobly, namely, Maurice Stevens and Burt L. Standish. Of those named, I consider Mr. Stevens the best, because of his adherence to the subject—athletics. In regard to characters, Mr. Stevens has them all beat. Jack Lightfoot, the hero of his stories, represents that type of young America that is bound to be a leader in nearly everything he undertakes. Phil Kirtland, Brodie Strawn, Tom Lightfoot, Wilson Crane and Ned Skeen are also true representatives of the author's ability. Of the five named, Phil Kirtland is perhaps the best result of his cleverness. A few words should also be said in behalf of his clever conception of a true Yankee lad—Jube Marlin. The last mentioned is perhaps the best of all when you come to think of it. There are mighty few writers who can get that true Yankee drawl down as fine as Mr. Stevens has. As I have taken considerable space in my lengthy argument, and have about exhausted all that I wish to say, I guess I will close my letter, hoping that Jack and his friends will meet with as much success on the football gridiron as they have on the baseball diamond.

Washington, D. C.

R. WILLIAMS.

This is a very interesting letter, indeed, which we have read with considerable pleasure. It marks the writer as a close student of human nature. The matter is of such a personal and flattering nature that further comment on our part would hardly be the right thing, but we wish to thank Mr. Williams cordially.

I have read ALL-SPORTS since No. 16, and think it great. I also get the *Tip Top Weekly*. Of the ALL-SPORTS characters, I like Tom, Jack, Lafe, Brodie Strawn and Nat Kimball best. I like the baseball stories very much, and hope Mr. Stevens will give us some football stories this fall. Well, not wishing to make this letter too long, I will close, wishing you the best of luck.

Yours truly,

G. B. S.

Chicago, Ill.

Brief, but to the point. Write again, G. B. S.

Should a boy of fourteen be allowed to have a gun? I am very eager to own one, and have saved up enough money to buy what I want, but my mother—I have no father—is timid, and seems afraid I'll hurt myself. Please tell me if a boy of my age isn't old enough to be trusted with firearms? I am careful enough, and would never, under any circumstances, point a gun, whether empty or loaded, at another person, and couldn't be hired to pull it through a fence or out of a boat with the muzzle toward me. But my heart is set on a gun. We have lots of game here.

WALTER S. CARSON.

Fargo, N. Dak.

On the whole, Walter, we should imagine that you are well fitted to use a gun, from what you say with regard to yourself. Your mother's anxiety is quite natural, however. Possibly you are her only boy, or, at least, the oldest, and she proudly hopes that some day you may fill with credit your father's vacant chair. At the same time she must remember that there seems to be a special Providence that watches over all boys in their sports. To many of us it is a wonder any of them survive the

countless chances they take in their various pastimes. But if she does consent, be sure you are always on your guard. And again, Walter, make up your mind that you will not buy a shotgun—for we presume that is the kind you want—until you have money enough in hand to get one of sterling worth—not a fancy gun, but with a good maker's name to it. A *cheap* gun is always dangerous.

I have always lived in the city until recently, when my folks moved out on a farm. It took me quite some time to get used to the change, but now I begin to see I'm going to like it. The work is hard, the hours long, but I guess I love nature, because I never tire of being out in the woods, and every chance I get to go fishing I'm there with the goods all right. Now, is this anything queer for a boy? My brother, who is just crazy over books, and believes in improving his mind every spare minute, tells me I'm just wasting my time, and preparing myself to be a drone in the world. I want to ask you if what he says is true? I do all the work given to me, and do it well. But my heart is on the hour of fishing, and I would shorten my night's sleep rather than give that up. I'm fond of ALL-SPORTS—even my studious brother reads that every week. Please advise me as soon as possible, for I want to do the right thing.

Muscatine, Ia.
A HAWKEYE BOY.

You are doing the right thing now. Any boy who completes his task and does his work well should be allowed to seek the peculiar kind of recreation that will thrill him with pleasure and make him forget he is tired. Your brother follows his bent in reading, and he has nothing to do with your choice so long as it is lawful. And, depend on it, among those who love to angle to-day you will find a host of illustrious names, from Roosevelt and Cleveland down. You are in good company, young Hawkeye.

I am an admirer of ALL-SPORTS, and I have every number from the beginning. As I have seen no letter from this place, I thought I would write and tell you that we like your weekly very much down here. Only you ought to have a Southern boy in it. Such a thing would win you many readers in Dixie, because, you know, we'd rather read about the adventures of a boy who lived in the South than anything else. Can you please tell me where I can get an outfit for a little "gym"? Some of us are talking of doing like Jack and his fellows did, if we find we have enough money saved up. We already have a place well fitted for the business, and own such things as boxing gloves, Indian clubs and weights. JOSEPH L. CARBODY.

Atlanta, Ga.

Perhaps at some time in the near future Mr. Stevens may see fit to supply the deficiency, as you consider it, in his stories, by introducing a boy from Dixie. The idea is a good one, and you can depend upon it that if he does this, you will have a character to admire. As to securing the various things that are useful in a gymnasium, write to Spalding Bros., in New York, for their catalogue of goods in that line, together with prices for the same.

Please let me know how I stand with regard to my measurements. I am 5 feet 4½ inches tall and weigh 113 pounds. Chest, at normal, 34 inches; waist, 26½ inches; hips, 32 inches; thighs, 19 inches, and calves, 14 inches. I have tried to take good care of myself for several years back. HALFBACK.

Hackensack, N. J.

And you certainly have done it, young fellow. Indeed, we do not believe you could improve on it in the least, for your measurements are so near the standard of an average athlete of your height that we feel disposed to mark you down at one hundred per cent. right in the start. Go up head, Halfback. You are a credit to the athletic teaching of such boys' papers as believe in a clean mind and a healthy body. We only wish there were many more like you.

I am glad that the baseball season is nearly over, because, not caring for the game, I have not enjoyed the many numbers

of your excellent weekly given over to it as much as others where the boys were engaged in other sports. Of course, Mr. Stevens was considerate enough to give up a portion of each baseball story to other things, which partly redeemed them in my eyes. I consider him the best writer for young people in the country, and this without exception. And I ought to know what I am saying, for I have read another publication for six years now, and feel myself in a position to decide. I want to ask Mr. Stevens please to have more about the girls in future stories—that is, those that are located in or near Cranford. Of course, if Jack and his friends go away on a hunting trip or a tour of exploration, we could hardly expect Nellie or Katie to be more than mentioned. Perhaps he does not imagine that he has many girl readers, but he would be surprised if he could see how the sisters of his boys also eagerly follow Jack's fortunes. Do, please, Mr. Stevens, give us more stories in which the girls have a part.

A GIRL WITH GRAY EYES.

Leavenworth, Kan.

Well, we can easily understand how our fair correspondent would prefer other stories to those devoted to baseball. We trust Gray Eyes does not feel so badly about football, because we anticipate having about half a dozen numbers given up to the great college game. We have laid your request before the genial author, and expect that he will endeavor to favor you.

Will you please tell me how I can grow taller? I am unusually short, and envy the fellows who are head and shoulders above me. They make fun of me, sometimes, too, which makes me mad. I'd do a lot to grow faster. I am very fond of ALL-SPORTS, and you give such good advice, I thought I would write and see if there was any way of my getting taller. Please do not print my name. I am twelve years old.

ANXIOUS.

East Orange, N. J.

While we sympathize with you, it is impossible for us to tell you how to beat nature at her game. We could give you any amount of good advice on how to take on flesh or get thin, how to increase the size of your chest or develop your muscles; but you remember where the Good Book says: "For which of you by taking thought can increase his stature one cubit?" However, don't despair. Giving your age was apparently an afterthought with you, but it is a very important point with us, for it tells us you have not yet reached the period, usually in the neighborhood of fourteen, when boys and girls take on a sudden growing streak and mount upward at a wonderful rate. Live a regular life, eat heartily and take plenty of outdoor exercise, and we have faith to believe that old Dame Nature will help you out presently.

I am inclosing my measurements for you to decide in what I am lacking. Also, tell me what to do in order to toe the mark, if I should be short in any one thing. I am surprised that you should so often mention *Tip Top Weekly* so favorably in your publication. As a usual thing New York publishers ignore each other. How is it, Mr. Editor? Now as to myself. I am 16 years old, 5 feet 6 inches in height and weigh 123 pounds. My chest measures 34 inches; waist, 28 inches, and calves, 14 inches, scant. I have very large lungs, and can blow up a football with one breath, which none of my boy friends seem able to do.

SANDWITH CLARKE.

Des Moines, Ia.

You're all to the good, Sandwith, save that you lack a full inch in your chest measurement. Suppose you put your great powers of lung inflation to some good service, and increase your girth in that particular until the tape tells you thirty-five inches. As to your query, we have been expecting it for some time. That other publication has for nearly ten years been the one ideal boys' publication in America, and, under the belief that there was room for another, we started ALL-SPORTS. The success attending our efforts has been more than gratifying to us. We are not ashamed to follow in the footsteps of a worthy leader, and we hope some day to even wrest the laurels from the one that has so long been first.

HOW TO DO THINGS

By AN OLD ATHLETE.

Timely essays and hints upon various athletic sports and pastimes, in which our boys are usually deeply interested, and told in a way that may be easily understood. Instructive articles may be found in back numbers of the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY, as follows: No. 14, "How to Become a Batter." No. 15, "The Science of Place Hitting and Bunting." No. 16, "How to Cover First Base." No. 17, "Playing Shortstop." No. 18, "Pitching." No. 19, "Pitching Curves." No. 20, "The Pitcher's Team Work." No. 21, "Playing Second Base." No. 22, "Covering Third Base." No. 23, "Playing the Outfield." No. 24, "How to Catch" (I.) No. 25, "How to Catch" (II.) No. 26, "How to Run Bases." No. 27, "Coaching and the Coach." No. 28, "How to Umpire." No. 29, "How to Manage Players." No. 30, "Baseball Points." No. 31, "How to Make a Cheap Skiff." No. 32, "Archery." No. 33, "Cross-Country Running." No. 34, "The Game of Lacrosse."

THE BOY WITH A HOBBY FOR COLLECTING.

The average boy has a hobby of some kind, which varies as he grows older, and an ordinary youngster, some time in his boyhood days, has developed a mania for collecting, whether it be stamps, coins, minerals or the thousand and one things a boy *can* collect. For the moment this occupies all his spare time, and he envies not a king, when he is fortunate enough to secure a new specimen for his collection.

It is a good sign when a boy develops the collecting mania, for it is a proof that he takes a healthy interest in life and is acquiring knowledge in a pleasing manner, which may not appeal to his serious nature at the time, but which will be remembered with gratitude as he grows older.

The greatest phase of the collecting mania that appeals to boys is stamp collecting, and, in these days, of postal cards, no book that ever was written will tell you so much about geography as you will learn by collecting stamps. We will not dwell on stamp collecting in this article, however, as there are so many books devoted to this subject.

Coins are all very well in their way, but as you can't get them without buying them, or, at any rate, giving some equivalent, it is rather an expensive hobby.

A more useful, and a more practical, hobby would be for a boy to endeavor to acquire the *sobriquet* of "The Young Naturalist."

An aquarium is a pleasing and instructive outlet to the boy whose mind is inclined to things piscatorial. The most important point for a boy who starts an aquarium to remember is, to keep the water fresh. Fishes and creatures of an amphibious nature require fresh water just the same as human beings do pure air. Then, too, an aquarium should be furnished with sea ferns and a rockery, for they will not only be appreciated by the funny creatures themselves, but are also a delight to the eye.

Fossils are a capital thing to take up if you care for geology at all, especially if you happen to be located in a neighborhood for finding specimens. The beauty of it is that you can never tell what you may come across, and an afternoon's ramble may possibly net you material returns for your trouble.

Ferns, flowers, leaves, grasses and seaweeds are all capital things to collect. Some collections I have seen—gathered by boys—have been really magnificent. I don't know anything that makes more show with comparatively little material. You also get ample satisfaction for your trouble. Apart from that, too, you get a lot of benefit

in an indirect way. Collecting things of this sort means long walks in the country; it means opening your eyes to all the beauties of trees and flowers and hedges; it means health and enjoyment for both mind and body.

A great many people think that bird-nesting is extremely cruel, and do all they can to stop boys collecting birds' eggs. I am sure this is a mistake. Many boys, it is true, cannot see a bird's nest without experiencing a desire to pull it down. They don't care about the eggs, but they think it is good sport—why, goodness only knows—to destroy it. Such brutes are not worthy the name of boys—they really deserve to be thrashed till they can't stand. But boys who have a deep-seated hobby for collecting eggs go about it in a very different spirit. Youngsters, when they first start collecting, and understand very little about it, knowing, probably, next to nothing concerning the ways and habits of birds, do many foolish and even cruel things; but it is only when they first start collecting. After they have secured two or three eggs they usually buy books to know what species they belong to, and then they at once begin to take an added interest in birds. They learn about their habits, where they build, what they feed upon, how it is possible to tell the different species, and everything else about them. It follows, with perfect certainty, that the more they learn about birds the more interest they must take in them, the fonder they will be of them, and the more they are apt to be ready at all times to champion their cause.

Taxidermy is not particularly difficult, if one knows how; but it is an art that must be carefully studied, and requires a deal of practice. It may be said to consist of three different departments: First, the skinning; second, the stuffing and setting up in a lifelike way, and, third, the arranging of specimens in a manner which shall neither shock the eye nor outrage nature.

The following useful hints should be followed by the boy who desires to succeed as an amateur taxidermist: First, in skinning, use the knife only when necessary; the fingers or the knife handle are preferable instead of the blade. Second, don't let the weight of the skull stretch the neck skin; rest the bird always on the table. Third, before skinning the head, plug the mouth and nostrils with a little cotton wool; this helps to keep the skin clean and nice. Fourth, you may purchase an ordinary stuffed bird in any big town for a small price. This is a good plan, for you can dissect it and see how it is set up. If you pass a taxidermist's window never go by without having a look in, for even a glance will give you new ideas of pose and grouping. Fifth, it would be better if you could obtain a lesson or two in the art; though, if you are clever, you need hardly trouble about this. If, however, you do take a lesson from a regular bird stuffer, let it be after, not before, you have had experience of your own. Purchase some standard book on taxidermy and study the simple rules found therein.

In concluding this little article on the boy with a hobby, I would strongly advise you to go in for collecting something or other. Such a collection will give you something to do at all times when you are at home, and will also teach you a tremendous lot that will be useful to you every day of your life. You very seldom meet a boy who is good for much, who doesn't collect something or other. You may safely put him down as a milksop, and a boy with little ambition, if he tells you that "he doesn't take any interest in that sort of thing."

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